No. 1162
7 July –
20 July 2006
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PRIVATE EYE

ENGLAND'S SHAME

A NATION MOURNS

WHAT'S A BOUNDARY?

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BBC TOP GEAR MAGAZINE
Top Manufacturer for Quality, Reliability and Customer Care in the UK. BBC Top Gear Magazine Motoring Survey 2002 to
Auto EXPRESS DRIVER POWER 2006
BEST MANUFACTURER: LEXUS
2002 to

Model shown RX 400h with metallic paint £36,900 OTR. RX range prices start from £36,350 to £45,765. Prices correct at time of going to press and include VAT, delivery charges, number plates, full tank of fuel, one year's road fund licence and first registration fee. BBC Top Gear Magazine Motoring Surve

RX 400h fuel economy figures: extra-urban 37.2mpg (7.6L/100km), urban 31.0mpg (9.1L/100km), combined 34.9mpg (8.1L/100km). CO_2 emissions 192g/km

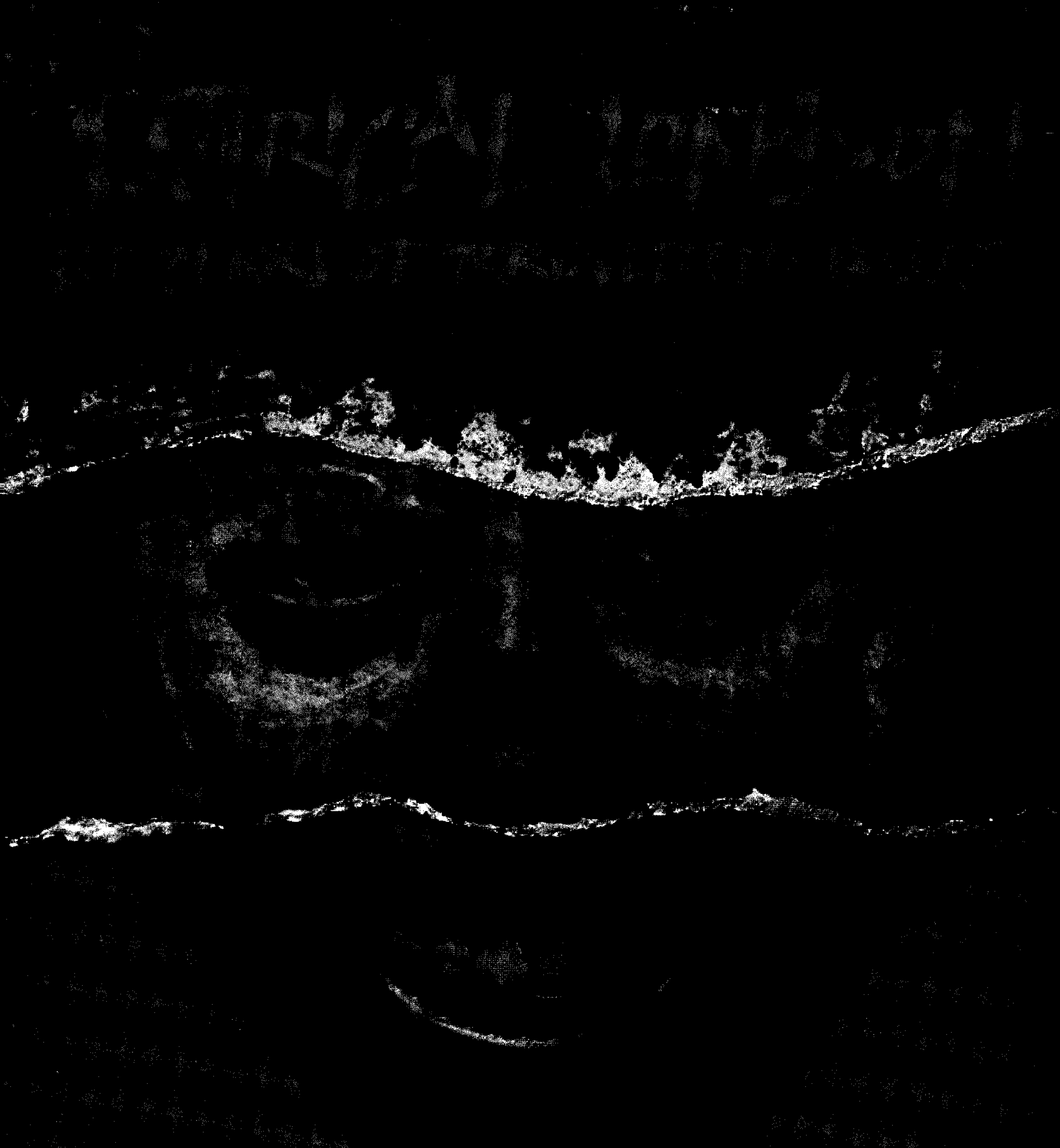
RX 400h. The world's first high performance hybrid SUV.

Conventional logic is a boundary. Lexus logic is different. It brings together the unheard of combination of V8-like power, superior fuel efficiency, and lower, category-leading CO_2 emissions. How? Through Lexus Hybrid Drive, which cleverly links a petrol engine with two electric motors. The result is the RX400h. A unique SUV, built to demolish boundaries and open up a whole new world of driving for you.

LEXUS

The pursuit of perfection

05 based on the results of questionnaires from over 76,000 motorists spanning 159 models from 36 manufacturers. Auto Express Driver Power Survey 2006 based on the results of questionnaires from 46,423 motorists. Calls to Lexus will be charged at local rate and may be monitored and recorded.



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Well-read card

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- Don't-care care homes; forensic foul-ups; pilot walls & more: In the Back 28, 29
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GRAVY TRAIN

HOW ironic that 10 years after they were created the three train leasing companies that supply nearly all the country's rolling stock should be referred to the Competition Commission on the grounds that they aren't competitive enough.

The idea to split the ownership of trains and track and to lease the trains to the operating companies, introducing the invisible hand of competition, came from the then senior Treasury civil servant responsible for rail privatisation, Steve Robson. Five years later, as Sir Steve, he left the government to take advantage of more commercial opportunities, including as director of Royal Bank of Scotland.

RBS does very nicely from its ownership of Angel Trains, one of the very companies that the government now alleges makes excessive profits, pushing up train fares, through anti-competitive behaviour. Robson, meanwhile, continues to promote the privatisation of public services so they can "enjoy" the benefits of competition!

Use for an England flag

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ABC

THAT'S ENOUGH EDS

THOUGH an EDS computer system is messing up the pay of some RAF crews (see *Eyes passim*), at least someone is being paid properly: step forward Michael Dugher, ex-special adviser to Geoff Hoon and now EDS's top UK lobbyist.

Since 2002 Dugher has been Hoon's special adviser, with particular responsibility for "procurement". Up until 2005, of course, Hoon was a defence minister, responsible not only for "procuring" the troubled EDS payroll system, but also for awarding an EDS-led consortium the massive £2bn-plus "Information Infrastructure" programme for the entire Ministry of Defence.

Last year Dugher tried unsuccessfully to be selected as a Labour parliamentary candidate, only to be taken on board by EDS. This is the firm's second recent British hiring, having already recruited former vice chief of the defence staff, Sir Anthony Bagnall.

IT HAPPENS

THE Libra computer system intended to join up magistrates courts is now so behind schedule that the support contract with Fujitsu will expire before it is fully installed in the courts.

The IT project will now cost at least £487m, three times what was bid in 1998 by ICL (now Fujitsu Services) and should be fully rolled out and ready to go by early 2008. The support contract will finish in March 2007.

The delays mean court workers currently have to work around three different obsolete systems that weren't designed to do all the things the courts now need to do – such as checking whether an offender has a history of failing to pay fines. Since the three systems weren't supposed to still be in use, no upgrade has been prepared for them. A National Audit Office report on fines collecting, produced in May, found that the delays have caused problems with the implementation of the Courts Act because staff have had to use time-consuming manual methods to deal with the number-crunching that the computers were supposed to do.

The Libra deal was described by the Public Accounts Committee in 2003 as "one of the worst PFI deals we have seen" (*Eye* 1094) – and at that point costs had only reached £390m. ICL had massively under-priced its bid and when it threatened to terminate the contract the Department for Constitutional Affairs was stuck in a corner and had to renegotiate the price upwards.

Number crunchings

£50,000

■ Cost of Snatch Land Rovers as used in Iraq and Afghanistan

■ Cost of John Prescott's official car

HOW THE EU WORKS

RED faces in Brussels over the death of Bruno, the first brown bear to enter Germany for 170 years, only to be gunned down by Bavarian hunters with official shoot-to-kill backing.

The wandering bear, it emerges, was in fact EU-funded – and part of €1m conservation project in Italy. A spokesman told the *Eye* there had been "co-ordination" between Italy, Austria and Slovenia to ensure bear welfare… but no one told the Germans.

WITH Britain's largest airport owner BAA being taken over by Ferrovial, why are Spanish companies acquiring so many big British businesses?

The same company now controls half the tube network after buying Amey, while telecoms company Telefonica last year snaffled O_2 and Banco Santander captured Abbey National.

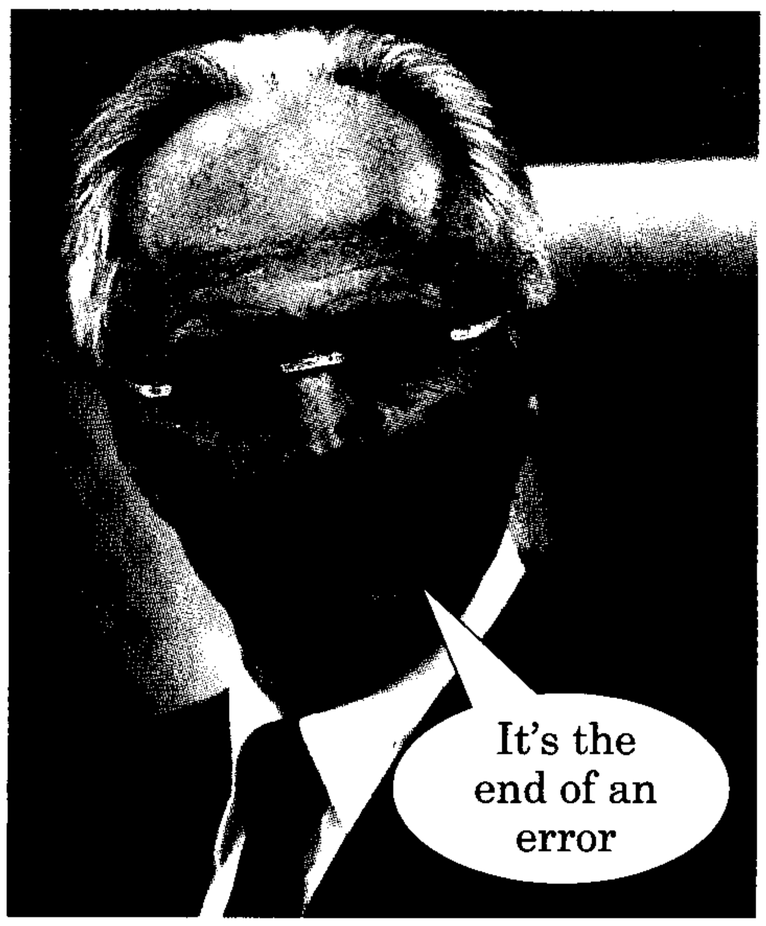
The reason is a tax break given to the companies by the Spanish government, amounting to a subsidy of up to 25 percent of the cost that allows the companies to out-bid rivals.

The European Commission has already declared this illegal "state aid" that distorts the European market, so why can the BAA takeover go ahead and still get the windfall from the Spanish taxpayer? Because in true commission style, the Spanish government has been given until 2010 to abolish the tax break, with the full subsidy available until the end of this year. Expect to see a few more corporate bargain hunters from Madrid...

Number crunchings

62% ■ Proportion of British people who voted in 2005 general election, prompting fears of voter apathy

32% ■ Proportion of British people who watched England's last World Cup match



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I'LL KEEP MY COOL… 'I've been kicked a few times in the tournament and I'm sure it will happen again on Saturday," Rooney revealed. 'You just have to get on with it and play your game. Above all, you have to stay cool.' – *Sun*, 29 June

Street Of Shame

IN THE past, when her actions as editor of the *Sun* and previously *News of the World* (naming and shaming paedophiles, admitting in the House of Commons that she paid bungs to policemen, printing pictures of Saddam in his pants, etc) have landed Rebekah Wade in hot water, she has relied on a procession of senior executives at News International – Graham Dudman, Stuart Kuttner, Alison Clark – to take the flak on her behalf.

These days, however, she settles for more lowly figures to serve as human shields. A week into the World Cup, the London correspondent of German news magazine *Focus* requested an interview with Wade to talk about her coverage of the tournament – but instead found himself talking to junior reporter Jerome Starkey, who has been with the paper since March 2004.

Described as "looking like Wayne Rooney would, if he dressed up as an investment banker", what insight did the 24-year-old offer into the ethos at Wapping? "We love our Queen and we love our military." And on Wade herself? "She interviewed me, but I've never seen her since."

HAS being forced to share the £100,000 cost of "outing" the unfortunately non-gay Ashley Cole in a joint settlement last month persuaded Andy Coulson of the *News of the World* and Rebekah Wade of sister paper the *Sun* that it might be an idea to start working more closely together?

Not if this week is anything to go by. On 3 July, the *Sun* reported that "former Home Secretary David Blunkett last night laughed off reports he is romancing TV beauty Amanda Burton" – reports which, naturally, had been splashed all over the previous day's *News of the World*.

THE *Mail on Sunday* certainly knows licence payer-funded smut when it sees it – especially if it marks "a new low in UK broadcasting history which raises serious doubts about the BBC's editorial controls and the future of the licence fee".

"A lot of people don't much like Mr Ross's grubby jokes and language but that only encourages him," sighed the paper's editorial, still reeling from the "obscene, lewd and grossly offensive" suggestion regarding Lady Thatcher made to David Cameron by Jonathan Ross on his BBC1 chat show at 11pm the previous Friday.

Over in sister paper the *Daily Mail*, meanwhile, media commentator Stephen Glover was frothing about the "smutty" and "squalid" behaviour of a "disgusting little toad" and "lowlife character whose chief ambition has always been to draw attention to himself".

Glover's moralising must have struck home with *Daily Mail* hackette Liz Jones, who had interviewed tennis player Venus Williams the previous day.

"I ask her if she is still a virgin and she almost chokes," Jones noted. "'Let's just say I don't want to go there,' and I see a twinkle in her eye. 'Come on Venus, have you done it yet?' She squirms like a teenager." The piece appeared under the not-at-all squalid headline: "Volleys, Violence and My Virginity."

The swearword is part of our linguistic arsenal, an ancient instrument of self-expression.

Observer

IN THE *Evening Standard*, media sage Professor Roy Greenslade gives a wholehearted endorsement of the assertion by *Daily Telegraph* chief executive Murdoch MacLennan that there are no plans to turn the paper tabloid when it moves to Victoria.

Alas! On the very day Mystic Greenslade's piece appeared, *Telegraph* hacks were being phoned up from Victoria and asked to file short early copy for… a dummy tabloid.

Telegraph staff now refer to the Victoria project as "Jonestown" – apparently in anticipation of a massacre.

"SOME journalists simply don't understand the internet," complains Shane Richmond, news editor of the online *Telegraph*, in his blog.

"Worse, many don't care about the internet at all; they are print people through and through. It requires patience and training to win these people over. And those who can't, or won't, be won over? Well, their job is to get out of the way.

"What it comes down to is this: if you're a journalist who plans to retire within the next five years you might just, and I repeat, just, get away with ignoring the internet. Any journalist who plans on having a career beyond that point needs to start understanding new media. And the sooner, the better."

Charming. Needless to say, this has gone down very well with the paper-obsessed, soon-to-be journalistic roadkill that is the *Daily Telegraph* news room.

"I've called this press conference to deny these stories that I respond to newspaper headlines"

THE only light relief in the *Financial Times* is the weekly "Martin Lukes" column of spoof emails from a self-important, jargon-spouting corporate boss, ghost-written by *FT* hack Lucy Kellaway.

In the 22 June instalment, Lukes decided to take over the boardroom as his office: "As I am the figurehead of this company, it is imperative that my visitors feel they are being treated with respect." This would also "free up" an office for Lukes's chauffeur, "who has been making a fuss about not having a place where he can watch TV".

Eerily enough, the *Private Eye* that appeared on news-stands the previous day featured a (genuine) new corporate boss who feels that her predecessor's sparkling new office "is not grand enough"; she has ordered it to be knocked down and replaced with something more awe-inspiring. We revealed that her other preoccupation is freeing up an office for her chauffeur, who needs somewhere to watch the sport on television.

Who is this female clone of the ghastly Lukes? Step forward Rona Fairhead, recently installed as chief executive of… the *Financial Times*.

THE transformation of the *Spectator* into a glossy, vacuous in-flight magazine is exemplified by the luxury-goods features that now appear weekly under the rubric "You've Earned It".

This puzzles some of the magazine's old guard. Given the readership profile, one veteran *Speccie* columnist suggests, surely it ought to be called "You've Inherited It".

O·B·N

For most people, going to a wedding is quite enough for a weekend. For Rupert Murdoch, however, much more must be squeezed into his schedule.

So, on a fleeting visit to Sydney, he managed to attend the wedding of Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban, turned up at a lunch to accept an award for being "the most influential Australian of all time," ignored a heckler, and then delivered a political speech in which he called on the Australian government to ditch media ownership regulations.

Mr Murdoch is 75. I don't know what he's on, but I know I want some.

ROY GREENSLADE
Evening Standard

Submitted by Nigel Jones

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"The devastating financial consequences of 'tasteless' home improvements are revealed in research published today… If you concrete over your front garden, typically to create off-road parking, you can say goodbye to about 2 percent of the value of your home."
– *Daily Mail*, 15 June

"Added Value: Converting a front garden to parking will routinely add 6.5 percent to any property."
– *Daily Mail*, 16 June

WEBSITE myspace.com "has long been a magnet for adult predators who pose as children to meet young victims on the internet", the *Guardian* reported last week. "Now, in an unusual case of role reversal, two Florida girls aged 13 and 14 have been charged with armed robbery after allegedly setting up a bogus profile of an attractive woman to snare lonely men."

The *Telegraph* covered the story too, but no word of it appeared in the *Times* – or indeed the *Sun*. Could this have something to do with the fact that myspace.com is owned by another lonely old man, one Rupert Murdoch?

***INDEPENDENT* columnist Mary Dejevsky devoted her entire column last week to excoriating political writer Iain Dale for his observation that online political commentary was an almost entirely male domain. "There's a good reason why women don't write blogs," she informed him. "They simply do not have the time."**

Alas, some of them do not have the time to check their facts, either – Dejevsky opened her column by informing readers that "Iain Dale is a Conservative pro-Cameron MP." Not only has Dale never served in parliament (he was an unsuccessful candidate last time round), he is such an arch-Cameroonian that he served as David Davis's chief of staff in the leadership election.

***OBSERVER* media pundit Peter Preston was one of the only commentators to rubbish the recent Sutton Trust study of the privileged background of top journalists.**

The day after Preston's column appeared, the author of the Sutton Trust report, Lee Elliot Major, wrote in the *Guardian* media section of a promising young hack who was initially ignored only to be given a job when an editor heard who his father was.

Might Elliot Major by any chance have been referring to Peter's son, Ben Preston of the *Times*?

INTERVIEWED by *Scotland on Sunday* two weeks ago, former City Slicker James Hipwell pointed out that although the Press Complaints Commission was told Piers "Morgan" Moron invested £20,000 in Viglen shares, the real figure was far higher.

Does it make any difference? Here's Hipwell's unimprovable reply: "For someone earning 250 grand a year, 20 grand looks like a punt, while 57 grand is about 25 percent to 30 percent of their salary. It's a huge investment. The fact is, he emptied his bank account into Viglen, sold everything in his Personal Equity Plan, everything in his wife's PEP, and ended up with nearly 70 grand in stocks and shares. And we're meant to believe he didn't know we were writing about Viglen? Bollocks."

NON-CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS

JASON COWLEY, editor of *Observer Sport Monthly*, reassures *New Statesman* readers that they shouldn't believe everything they read in *Private Eye* – such as our story about a World Cup game in Dortmund, where Cowley denounced a steward who questioned his accreditation as a "money-grubbing bastard" and was taken by German police to a quiet room until he calmed down.

So what did happen? "It was hot and I was late; let us just say a robust discussion followed between me and a steward, who resembled a cross between the former Manchester United goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel and an enraged Bart Simpson. He was wearing a baseball cap, which I could not resist knocking from his head, as you would. There followed a little tussle and I was soon in the agreeable company of the German military."

We apologise profusely for confusing the German police with the German military, and for omitting to mention that the *Observer* hack knocked the steward's cap off. We are happy to set the record straight.

IN *Eye* 1158 we revealed a cock-up by *Express* group managing editor John Maddock, who offered a staff job on the *Sunday Express* business section to Tom Wainwright, a trainee hack, but then called him in the next day to say he'd got the wrong Tom – he had meant to give the post to another of Dirty Des's trainees, Tom Price.

All perfectly true. What we neglected to add was that both Toms turned it down. Two months on, the vacancy in the Sunday business pages remains unfilled. Why? Could it have anything to do with Desmond's long record of using the *Sunday Express* business pages to settle scores with corporate rivals?

FINEST
ROAST SIRLOIN OF BEE

Do not eat the wax layer

Tesco packaging

FOOTIE 'N' MOUTH

Sick as a parrot

"German rag hurls vile new taunts at poorly hero Becks: DAVID Beckham had plenty to feel sick about last night – after another stomach-churning attack from a German paper. He was mocked for throwing up at the Ecuador game and dubbed 'David Brecham' after the German word for vomit – 'brechen'. Vile rag *Bild* even hurled abuse at the England team by suggesting Becks chucked up because they played such sickening soccer." – *Sun,* 28 June

"Queasy Does It… Only Sick When You're Winning… Becks Gave All He's Gut But This Left Us All Feeling Sickly: Watching England has been giving us all that queasy feeling for many years. It even made the captain sick yesterday." – *extracts from the* Sun*'s coverage of Beckham vomiting, 26 June*

Second opinions

"BINGE DRINK ALERT BY NHS: Huge rise in hospital admissions with young most at risk" – *Evening Standard,* page 1, 30 June

"OOH, THEY'VE HIT THE BAR: Here they are – exclusive pictures of the England wives and girlfriends in training for tomorrow's big fixture (or, more accurately, the post-match party). So far nothing's got past these girls: champagne, slammers, breezers, white wine, red wine, vodka, they've stopped the lot…" – *Evening Standard, page 3, 30 June*

Constructive criticism

"SO WHAT IS THE POINT OF OWEN HARGREAVES? Owen Hargreaves is in England's world cup squad – but why? That's what right-thinking Three Lions fans have asked since Sven named the Canadian-German-sort-of-Englishman in his party. Does he have ANY supporters in the country? Do you know anyone walking around in an England shirt with Hargreaves' name and number on the back? Have you seen a fan of the lesser spotted Hargreaves?" – *Sun,* 7 June

"Our shape was good in the first half and Owen Hargreaves looked a quality holding midfielder, which gave us that all-important balance. He broke things up, his tackling was sound and his distribution was neat and precise. Just what you want from a man in that position… Hargreaves is delighted to have finally proved his worth to the England boo-boys. The Bayern Munich midfielder was outstanding in the holding role against Sweden in his first Three Lions start for two years." – *Sun,* 21 June

Crystal Balls

"Player to watch: Wayne Rooney, England Why: The healing manchild needs finally to lay the ghost of 2004 to rest. What he'll do: Score early on and then form part of a 10-man defensive shield" – *Guardian,* 1 July

"Rooney has tens of millions of English folk begging him to lead them out of darkness. If anyone can, it's him." – *Paul Hayward,* Daily Mail*, 29 June*

"Your Country Needs Roo: Hero Wayne Ready To Roar." – Sun *front page story, 1 July*

Lacking in Ikeas

"The best England can hope for in Cologne is that the Swedes do their Ikea impersonation – and start falling apart when they're put under a bit of pressure." – *Daily Star, 5 June*

"Even if Sven-Goran Eriksson leads England to World Cup success, he's not the most successful import from Sweden. And you can forget Abba, too, since home furnishings giant IKEA saw 33 million shoppers pass through its 14 stores in Britain last year. But was Sven thinking about the pop quartet when he picked Theo Walcott? 'Take a chance on me' sounds like a plea from the Arsenal wonder kid, who has yet to feature at the finals." – *Evening Standard,* 20 June

"Echoing his Abba compatriots, Sven-Goran Eriksson can take a chance on Rooney." – *Daily Telegraph,* 26 May

"Sven Goran Eriksson last night threw down the gauntlet to Sweden – declaring: Come and Abba go if you think you're hard enough!" – *Sun,* 20 June

"Tonight should be a special occasion for £4m-a-year Sven – his country of birth against his country of wealth. But the man whose nationality is as synonymous with Sweden as Ikea betrayed precious little emotion yesterday as he assessed the last group phase sparring before the knockout stages." – *Daily Mail,* 20 June

"England's Swedish love affair is about as wobbly as an Ikea wardrobe – but foreign coaches are still all the rage at the World Cup" – *Express,* 24 June

"Sven Watch: He's Got No Ikea" – *Sun,* 26 June

"This was the world that Sven walked into – the world of the England football team… He arrived with no religious baggage and with no apparent skeletons in his Ikea cupboard." – *Independent on Sunday,* 2 July

"Abba were supposedly Sweden's most expensive export, but scheming Sven was really the winner who took it all" – *Sunday Times,* 2 July

A sense of proportion

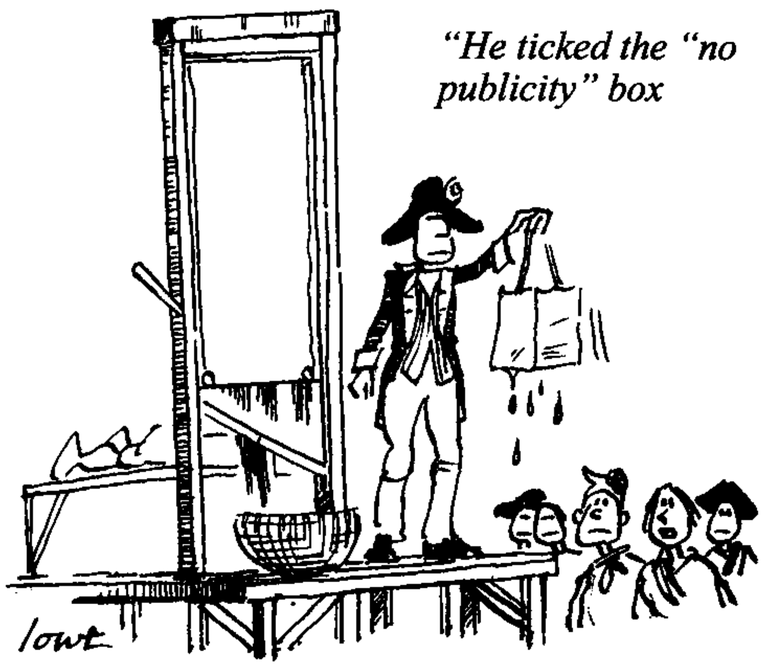
"We stay in a good, healthy mix of hotels. It's a bit like being in the SAS: we're never allowed to get too comfy." – *Gabby Yorath,* Times, *19 June*

"Every four years it's the same. The hand of God, the sending off, the miskick that finds only England's net – the fluke that shatters the dream. Each World Cup some freakish incident dashes England's hopes with such predictable regularity that the only truly surprising thing is the surprise itself… To treat the consistent as aberrant not only defies commonsense but prevents any intelligent assessment of the nature and scale of the problem at hand. So it is with the slew of alleged atrocities committed by the US military in Iraq…" – *Gary Younge,* Guardian*, 26 June*

"CHEER UP! Look on the bright side. England are out but your Sun Online has loads of reasons to be cheerful. PICTURE SPECIAL The Somme Remembered." – Sun *website, 3 July*

Backing Our Boys

"World Cup: Come On England – This summer will be extraordinary. Many people will be cheering the team on this summer, but we'll also be helping people sell and move home. Please reply to this email by clicking here to book a free valuation and benefit from our award-winning service. To view the fixture list for all of the world cup games please click here." – *email from Haart estate agents, Exeter branch*



"He ticked the "no publicity" box

DAVID Cameron's shadow attorney-general, Dominic Grieve MP, has been touring radio studios backing his leader's plan to scrap the Human Rights Act because it's "not British" – based as it is on the European convention on human rights.

This may surprise Tory MPs who recall Grieve's maiden speech on 21 May 1997, just after New Labour had been elected with a mandate to incorporate the European convention into British law. "Perhaps I might give an example of where I suspect I might be at variance with some of the views of my colleagues on the Conservative Benches, but it is a variance that I have held for a long time," he told the Commons. "The incorporation of the European convention on human rights into our national law is something that, although challenging, is nevertheless desirable if it can be done without diminishing the sovereignty of parliament. I believe that it can."

SHOULD *Nuts* and *Zoo* be on the top shelf? "I don't know what I think about that, actually," Tony Blair told a delegation from the British Society of Magazine Editors last week, claiming that he had never seen any magazines of that sort.

Should he be believed? There's an eerie echo here of a *Newsnight* interview in May 2002 when Jeremy Paxman recited the titles of various publications owned by Blair's new friend and benefactor Richard Desmond – *Mega Boobs*, *Horny Housewives*, *Skinny and Wriggly* – and asked if the PM knew what they were like. After a moment's embarrassed silence, Blair replied: "No, I don't."

This was a lie. Early the previous year, soon after Desmond bought his way into Fleet Street, Blair asked *Express* political editor Anthony Bevins why he was leaving the paper. By way of reply, Bevins took from his briefcase a pile of Dirty Des's wank-mags and threw them down in front of the prime minister – who shuddered at what he saw.

'Backbiter'

TRAVEL NEWS

CHEAPO airline Ryanair is once more threatening legal action to close down a website on which disgruntled passengers can let off steam.

Ryanair, notoriously difficult to complain to if your flight is cancelled or your baggage goes missing, nearly succeeded in getting the www.ryanair.org.uk site closed last year (*Eye* 1124).

The site's internet service provider, ClaraNet, cravenly took it down after pressure from Ryanair, but an ISP in Canada put it back up.

The website was set up by Michael Coulston in 2004 after his Italian holiday was ruined when Ryanair lost his luggage and left him stranded at Ancona airport with only the clothes he stood up in. The airline then charged him £160 to fly back to the UK and only refunded that after Coulston contacted the *Grauniad*'s consumer help page.

Dozens of other pissed-off travellers have since added their accounts of bad experiences at the hands of Ryanair, and this clearly has got under the normally thick skin of the airline's management.

The latest threatening letter to Coulston demands that he transfer the domain name to Ryanair pronto. No such undertaking has been given. Instead Coulston has updated his website, with knobs on.

CALLED TO ORDURE

GREAT shrieks are heard about the cost of replacing Trident, but what about the billions being hosed at a new computer system for the National Health Service? How many billions exactly? Good question!

Officials were amazingly woolly when they appeared before the Public Accounts Committee last week. The bad-tempered hearing, which followed a long-delayed National Audit Office (NAO) report, did nothing to soothe fears that the world's largest computer procurement is going hideously wrong.

The NHS fielded Sir Ian Carruthers, acting chief executive, and Richard Granger, the grandly-titled "Director-General of IT". Bumbling, amiable Carruthers, a cliché spouter of the first water, recently took over from Sir Nigel Crisp who was thrown a peerage when he was sacked.

MPs were first treated to some piffle from Carruthers about "good practice". But the NHS suits did not even bring along their own cost-benefit analysis – one of the most rudimentary managerial weapons. Might it not have been "good practice" to have had that to hand when facing scrutiny from parliament?

The committee's chairman, ruby-faced Tory Edward Leigh, soon clashed with Granger over the NAO report which was delayed by a year. Granger said that "the Department of Health had possession of the report for review for only 59 days out of the last year and a half". In other words, "it wasn't us who delayed it". This increases suspicion that ministers caused the hold-up. It would be politically awkward for Gordon Brown if voters realised how their tax billions were being pissed down the drain by an incompetent NHS.

The tone of the exchanges was terse. When Leigh asked if it was right that consultants at Accenture were now expecting a £450m loss on this contract, Granger icily denied it. He said: "They have made a provision against potential future losses which have not crystallised." Or, as a normal person might say, "yes".

Granger was not the only person to earn Leigh's wrath. An ex-Department of Health dissident, Prof Peter Hutton, started to read long answers off a script. Leigh barked: "May I just say Professor Hutton, as the afternoon wears on, that it is better if you do not read. Lift up your head and talk to me." Poor Hutton. MPs heard that he and other dissidents used to have to resort to secret meetings in a Starbucks at Leeds railway station to exchange concerns, such was their terror of being discovered.

The committee smelt a rat over the much-delayed NAO report, Tory MP Greg Clark, calling it "gushing". If it was so positive, why had it been so long delayed? Clark told the NAO's Sir John Bourn that it was his job to alert parliament to "areas of major concern" with big spending projects, not to gush. Bourn, who thinks himself exceedingly grand, pulled a face like a dog turd and insisted that he was impressed by the "clear leadership" of the project.

Former Deloitte consultant Granger, a self-styled tough guy (whose previous job was organising the London Congestion Charge), has compared managing this project to "a sledge pulled by huskies". When one of the dogs goes lame and begins to slow the others, it is shot. It is then chopped up and fed to the other dogs. The survivors work harder, not just because they have had a meal but also because they have seen what will happen should they themselves go lame. Granger said he was "delighted" that MPs had noted his vivid image about how to deal with private contractors.

Alas, multi-billion IT projects are a bit more complicated than teams of huskies. What happens if some of the suppliers go bust and the rest of the project is scuppered? In addition to Accenture's half-a-billion black hole, other suppliers are in all sorts of trouble. Husky-killing suddenly looks not such a great idea.

Labour MP Austin Mitchell asked: "Why, if the programme was originally estimated to cost £6.2bn and then £12.4bn, did (Health Minister) Lord Warner recently say it cost £20bn?" Carruthers went into a long burst of turbo-charged waffle which left no one much the wiser.

There was still time for a spat between Tory MP Richard Bacon and Granger. "How much has been committed irrevocably to the programme so far?" asked Bacon. Granger said he didn't know. Bacon (appalled): "You do not know? You do not know?" It took several more goes before Granger admitted that of the £12bn currently earmarked for the project approximately £1.5bn" has been spent. Getting this information was like drawing teeth from a horse. When the NHS witnesses were unable to supply a cost-benefit analysis, Bacon almost chewed his own rind in anger.

The hearing ended with Bacon trying to find out how many "senior responsible owners" of the project there had been (this is Whitehall jargon for the person who takes responsibility). Carruthers was simply hopeless as he tried to remember the various helmsmen. Names were bandied about like half-remembered racehorses. It turned out there had been six "senior responsible owners" in just two years. Maybe that's what Sir John Bourn means by "clear leadership".

'Gavel Basher'

BANKERS

SINCE the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) ruling that charges for late or over-the-limit credit card bill payments are much too high, several banks, including Lloyds TSB, HSBC, Egg and HBOS, have announced that they will be reducing their maximum charge to £12 in line with the decision.

Even Barclaycard grudgingly announced that although it "disagrees strongly" with the OFT, it will drop to £12 to "remove uncertainty" for customers.

One *Eye* reader was therefore surprised to be charged £38 by his bank, NatWest, for going just £5 over. He wrote to the bank, quoting the OFT ruling and received a reply stating: "We do not accept the Office of Fair Trading's findings in relation to credit card fees." Good old NatWest!

"They should never have let him out"

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

MORE emerges on how the city of Strasburg has been ripping off European taxpayers for a quarter of a century.

Back in April it was revealed that Strasburg leases certain buildings in the city from a Dutch pension fund and then sublets them to the European parliament. By systematically overcharging the parliament, the city has skimmed off a handy €80m.

MEPs are furious about the rip-off and profess surprise at the revelations. But at least one person was in an ideal position to have known about the scandal years ago.

They stole our idea!

When the parliament's original rental contract took effect in 1980, it was signed by the mayor of Strasbourg, one Pierre Pflimlin, a former prime minister of France. In the mid-1980s, the contract was then modified to the further benefit of the city. Rent was expressed in ecus and an automatic two-yearly rent rise based on consumer prices was agreed by the president of the European parliament (to the dismay of MEPs on the budget committee).

And who was the president of the parliament at the time? None other than Pierre Pflimlin!

THE job of keeping a lid on scandals in the EU continues thanks to the good offices of a little-known but powerful caucus in the Brussels bureaucracy, the European parliament's Conference of Presidents.

This six-person "conference", which clamps down whenever unsavoury information threatens to become too public, is dominated by two Germans: Hans-Gert Pöttering, leader of the parliament's large centre-right EPP grouping, and Martin Schulz, leader of the nearly-as-large socialist group. Their voting strength within conference is based on the numbers of MEPs whom they represent; and their reputation for protecting EU institutions from public disclosure is such that they are known collectively as "the Berlin Wall".

In the past the conference not only tried to support the survival of the discredited Santer commission, but also tried (unsuccessfully) to block reinstatement of whistleblower Paul van Buitenen, now a Dutch MEP, to the European Commission. It is currently trying to hush up scandal by stopping parliament's petitions committee from preparing a report on the ombudsman's findings on the abusive treatment by Olaf, the EU's anti-fraud office, of Hans-Martin Tillack, the investigative reporter whose files were seized in a police raid (see *Eyes passim*).

In the words of Jens-Peter Bonde, a Danish MEP prominent in the cause of transparency and democracy, it is ridiculous for the conference to prevent another part of the parliament from simply doing its job.

REMEMBER how Tony Blair wanted Britain to be at the heart of Europe and said the EU "should be democratic... with greater openness and transparency of decision-making [and] greater participation"? An initiative considered by heads of state at the European Council last month should have cheered him hugely.

European ministers wanted to open up their discussions on legislation by broadcasting them live over the internet in all EU languages. There were a few ifs and buts – foreign affairs were off limits and individual debates could still be held in secret if ministers wanted – but the proposal was broadly welcomed.

Only one member state dragged its feet and tried to delay matters by saying the proposed new openness was a step too far. The sour puss did eventually fall into line, but only when it became clear that everyone else in the EU wanted to move forward, not back. The foot-dragger in question? Step forward… the United Kingdom!

BLACKWATCH

MORE trouble for former *Telegraph* owner Lord Black of Toad Hall as he awaits trial on charges of mail and wire fraud, money laundering, racketeering, obstruction of justice and being a toad.

Prosecutors in Chicago last week called for the old rogue's bail to be revoked, accusing him of giving "false and misleading information" about the extent of his personal wealth. They say the financial affidavit which formed the basis for his bail terms omitted millions of dollars in additional assets.

In his original statement Black claimed to have less than $300,000 at his disposal – yet in April this year he wrote a cheque for $460,279 to the Palm Beach tax collector, and in June he donated $500,000 to the Canadian opera company.

In papers submitted to a US district judge, attorney Eric Sussman wrote: "Black's assets mysteriously increase in value without his knowledge, his debts diminish overnight, his business partners want to give him millions of dollars he never even realised he was owed and he is able to take all the accolades for charitable contributions from a $3.1m foundation, despite claiming no direct or indirect control over the foundation's assets."

Sussman is particularly interested to know why Black has promissory notes worth $6m from Horizon Publications Ltd, a company run by his former business partner David Radler, who is now lined up as the star prosecution witness against his ex-chum.

Conrad and his lovely wife Barbara Amiel are also due a $16m windfall from the sale of their shares in another company, Horizon Operations Ltd – something else he forgot to mention in his financial affidavit.

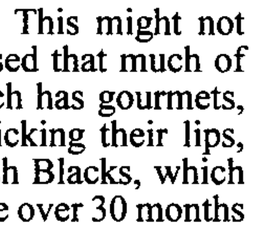
By way of reply, Black's lawyers insisted "there was no skulduggery". They accused the prosecutor of making "unsubstantiated assertions" that were "dripping with sarcasm perhaps unworthy of the government".

Meanwhile it emerged that Black has defaulted on his mortgage for the Palm Beach mansion that consolidated his $20m bond, leading prosecutors to worry that the property could be seized either by the lender or by the Canadian government, to whom he owes back taxes. The prosecution alleges that Black exaggerated the value of his equity in the house in order to get bail.

Judge Amy St Eve declined the application to withdraw Mr Toad's bail and send him to the slammer forthwith. But she has told him to provide a new financial statement which is somewhat closer to the truth, and ordered that the cash from Horizon must be frozen in his account until further notice. "Nothing can be spent without further order of the court," she warned.

The trial itself begins next March. Whether his lordship can keep out of custody until then remains to be seen.

Down on the Farm



YOU don't get something for nothing, as the old saw has it, and never is this truer than when it comes to a concession from the EU.

In March it was trumpeted that, ten years after the height of the great BSE scare, the EU had finally agreed to lift the remainder of its ban on British beef exports. To the NFU the chance "to recover our £675m a year export trade" was "the most positive news from Britain's meat industry in a decade". Everything, we were led to believe, was now back to where it was before 1996, when Brussels slapped its worldwide export ban on anything remotely associated with beef, even down to wine gums made from gelatin.

But scarcely was finest Scotch beef once again back on the tables of the finest Parisian restaurants, than many of those involved at the quality end of Britain's meat trade began looking at the small print of the deal. In return for lifting the ban Brussels has insisted on some rather important conditions.

The first is that Britain had to accept the continental rule that meat from animals over 24 months old can no longer be sold unless it is cut away from their spinal columns. This might not sound too serious until it is realised that much of the tastiest beef, of the kind which has gourmets, top restaurateurs and TV chefs licking their lips, comes from breeds, such as Welsh Blacks, which do not reach maturity until they are over 30 months old.

Meat from younger animals tastes nothing like so good. Thus, reducing the age limit, even though this was opposed by no less a body than the European Food Safety Authority, rules out serving beef on the bone, and makes it a criminal offence to serve T-bone steaks at all. What even the late lamented Jack Cunningham failed to do some years back (remember when we were told that the chances of contracting CJD from a T-bone steak were infinitely smaller than those of being struck by lightning?) has now been achieved at the stroke of an EU bureaucrat's pen.

Another condition laid on the hapless British meat industry is one which makes it much more difficult, if not in many cases impossible, to hang quality meat for the time necessary to bring it to its best flavour. Every butcher in the land now has to comply with an EU rule that, once a beast has emerged from the slaughterhouse, it can no longer go anywhere except direct to the shop where it is to be sold. No longer can the carcass be left to hang in a cold store. Unless a butcher has the facilities to hang it at the back of his own shop, which most smaller butchers do not, it will no longer be possible for him to sell beef of the highest quality.

Thanks to these and other new rules, many smaller butchers and slaughterhouses fear they will find it hard to survive. As usual, the only winners from these new regulations are the big boys, such as the supermarket chains, who are scarcely concerned with selling properly hung, top quality meat anyway. It will be another victory for the bureaucrat's desire to drag us all down to the same bland, standardised, homogenised level, while the skill of those craftsmen who over the centuries have learned how to give us the finest meat can be allowed to slip quietly into history.

'Muckspreader'

TV EYE

Friday Night With Jonathan Ross (BBC1)

Coup! (BBC2)

A FEW months ago, when Lady Thatch had a dizzy spell at the hairdresser and was taken to hospital for a check-up, the BBC coverage seemed entirely out of proportion to the story. Even though tests had shown no problem, the news that this was really nothing was delivered live by political editor Nick Robinson, standing outside A&E.

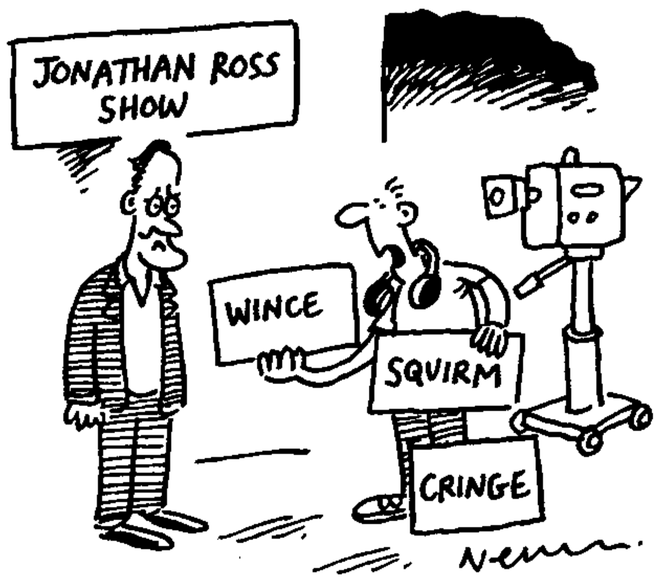
This ludicrous over-reaction to a slight cold gave the game away. With the Queen Mum and the Pope now having taken their final places in the telly schedules, Thatch has replaced them as the BBC's number one obituary target. So, as soon as she went a bit hot under her curlers, the death-watch operation went into action, with Robinson in position to deliver the *coup de grace* if necessary.

Impatient for her to go, the corporation seems to have started a strategy to raise her blood-pressure high enough to shatter her already frail vascular system. Within the space of a week, one programme chortled over her as a wank-fantasy, while another depicted her as an alcoholic old hag with an idiot son.

For many, this treatment will seem justifiable but still insufficient revenge for the poll tax and the miners' strike; but that isn't the point. The interesting thing is what these programmes reveal about the BBC's current attitudes.

For example, one way of looking at the edition of **Friday Night With Jonathan Ross** on which Wossy sought to find out if the teenage Dave Cameron had ever had a J Arthur while looking at a picture of the then Tory heroine, is that Dave should have known exactly what he was letting himself in for when he booked himself on a show notorious for its double entendres and that, politics being a rough old trade, both the current and the former Tory leader should be able to take what they get.

But look at it another way. The BBC spent almost two decades living in terror of Thatcherism and the Tory Party. At a time when it would have been a true public service to be robust and indifferent to her feelings, the corporation largely wasn't. Only now, when she's a sick old lady and a Conservative Party desperately distancing itself from her is not going to object to her being ridiculed by a populist presenter, do they find their teeth against her.



"Your cue-cards, Mr Cameron"

Nor should Ross be seen as a heroic tribune of the people. His supposed daring is tactical and calculated. Bruce Willis, appearing in the same edition as Dave, was treated with a deference bordering on Sir Trevor's royal interviews. We can be certain that, if Bruce's people let it be known that he didn't want to be asked about Demi, the request would be met without demur.

And, wouldn't you know, when Wossy landed the job last week of hosting the Queen's children's party on television, he was careful not to crack jokes about her as a teenager looking over-longingly at pictures of Winston Churchill. In fact, surprise surprise, he was slickly monarchistic. So, surprise, surprise, the host's irreverence seems to extend only to politicians and very minor celebrities.

Coup!, the much-trailed drama about the boy Mark's attempt to take over Equatorial Guineau by force, was equally revealing of the broadcasters' priorities. This show also looked much braver than it was. In the style of a previous Jeffrey Archer play, the film belonged to the odd genre of satirical drama-doc. So, while featuring real people and showing them taking part in events which appeared in newspapers and were the subject of extensive legal proceedings, the action and dialogue were cartoonish and exaggerated. Drama-doc is always a troublesome form because of the problem of knowing what really happened and was said; but it becomes even more pointless if the script keeps signalling that it isn't to be taken seriously. But the reason the BBC has come up with this hybrid style is legal cowardice. Burlesque and satire are harder to sue than journalistic dramas. Lacking the nerve to make serious fact-based pieces such as Channel 4's David Kelly drama *The Government Inspector*, they make these half-arsed pantos instead.

Another sign of this cowardice was that the play completely accepted Mark Thatcher's original claim that he didn't realise it was a coup he was backing. The script dutifully showed him being duped. But, during his plea bargain with South African authorities, the boy admitted that he guessed what was happening much earlier on.

So the only really fearless scene was the one showing a pissed Thatch begging party guests for more Scotch. And how brave, in the end, is that? Just like the Ross-Cameron exchange, *Coup!* appeared to be tough but was always being careful about who it offended.

'Remote Controller'

AD NAUSEAM

AS THE World Cup nears its end, yet more related advertising campaigns are unravelling quicker than Sven Goran Eriksson's reputation.

The biggest own goal has been scored by Asda and Domino's, both of which had spent heavily on TV commercials fronted by Michael Owen – who performed feebly in the first two games and was then stretchered off in the next with a freak knee injury.

Asda must be doubly embarrassed because Owen wasn't originally included in its marketing plans. Instead, it was going to use Wayne Rooney and girlfriend Coleen McLoughlin. When Rooney was struck down six weeks before the tournament, Asda hastily signed up Owen – only to see Rooney recover and lead England's attack. Rooney's red card probably made the hapless Owen the less disastrous choice.

The problem for both brands is that the TV airtime had been bought up front, meaning that viewers have been watching spots of Owen haring round a supermarket or making conversation with two lads about the footie, even after he had been sent home to convalesce.

Whether anyone actually believed that he did his shopping at Asda and ordered takeaway pizzas from Domino's is, of course, open to question. But the reddest face of all belongs to mortgage lender Northern Rock which had to pull its press ads of Owen alongside the words "Can we have him back in one piece please?" Seemingly not.

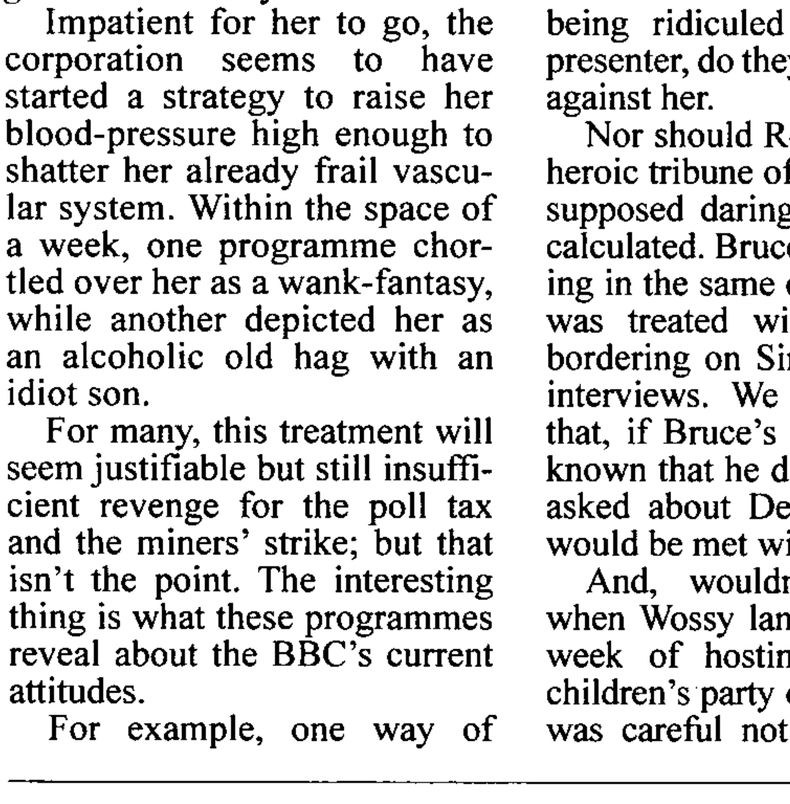
IT IS with the deepest regret that we come to report the end of a lengthy marriage, after one party was caught soliciting.

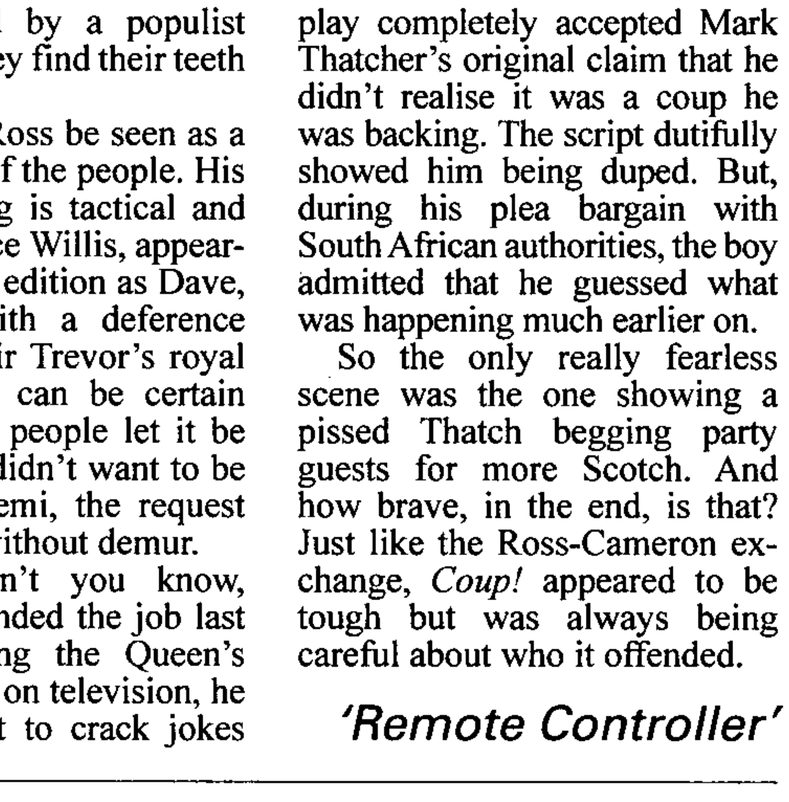
French Connection has been speaking to a new ad agency, Yellow Door, for its next campaign. This stands as a thinly-veiled "fcuk off" to its longtime collaborator Trevor Beattie and his agency BMB, after they failed to reverse a sales crisis with an ad featuring kung-fu lesbian strippers that was copied from a music video.

Eye 1153 described this barefaced larceny, asking "When Trevor Beattie sold French Connection this 'idea' to front their £2m campaign, did he mention that he'd nicked it?" The impending divorce suggests he didn't.

FOLLOWING the news that Heinz is axing 125 jobs and moving production of HP Sauce to Holland (*Eye* 1159) – jobless UK workers will be gratified to learn they are not the only ones: next year, Heinz will jettison 8 percent of its workforce, or 2,700 people, worldwide.

The newly-unemployed will be even more gratified to learn that what managers are terming "aggressive cost-cutting" is all in a good cause: next year, Heinz will increase its advertising and marketing budget by $50m to $317m.





DUMB BRITAIN

Big Brother, C4

Questioner: Who was the first English monarch to be divorced?

Aisleyne: What's a monarch?

Questioner: A king or queen.

Aisleyne: Oh... Charles.

Questioner: Who was the youngest member of the Beatles?

Aisleyne: Bono.

Steve Wright in the Afternoom, Radio 2

Wright: On this day in 1963, how did Valentina Tereshkova become famous?

Contestant: Was she the first woman to grow a potato?

COMMUNICATIONS regulator Ofcom has finally been forced to extend its review of junk food advertising to cover a pre-watershed ban, after health campaigners threatened a judicial review.

Chief executive Stephen Carter was quick to set out his stall in a comment piece for the *FT* in which he trotted out the standard junk food industry line that childhood obesity has many causes, kids aren't active enough, etc. What's more, he pointed out, "Ofcom is obliged in law to protect the public by maintaining television standards" – and advertising pays for that.

So which channels are so dependent on advertising junk food to produce high quality TV? Ofcom's own study reveals that those with the greatest proportion of revenues at risk from a junk food ad ban are… GMTV, Boomerang, Toonami and Nicktoons. How *would* standards be maintained if these channels lost a few million quid?

Income from kids channels also happens to be crucial to cable companies such as NTL, from whom Carter was recruited three years ago, and other parts of the TV industry to which he may return when he leaves Ofcom in October. Carter certainly hasn't lost touch with the advertising business during his stint as a regulator: he is chairman of the Marketing Group of Great Britain, described by a spokesman as a "social networking group for anyone who works in marketing", while his wife works for an advertising and marketing group, WPP, that counts McDonald's among its clients.

In the likely event that Ofcom doesn't ban pre-watershed junk food advertising, the government, as Carter points out, has the power to overrule the regulator. But that would seriously upset the powerful food and drink lobby – so there's a fat chance of it happening.

Inevitably his duties brought him into close contact with the Royal Family. He blew the hunting horn at Balmoral to welcome the Waleses home from their honeymoon, and was responsible for mounting members of the family when they expressed an interest in riding.

Obituary, Daily Telegraph

IN THE COURTS

LAST week was a grim one for the *Sunday Times*'s former star sports hack, David Walsh. Instead of being at Wimbledon covering the tennis courts, he found himself in the law courts instead.

Walsh and the *Sunset Times* were being sued by Lance Armstrong, the American cyclist, over a book the writer published in French (though notably not in English), and a subsequent spin-off article published by the paper – which, according to the seven-time Tour de France winner, depicted him as a drug cheat.

The first pre-trial hearing took place last week, just before this year's Tour was getting underway minus 30 riders, including some of the favourites, after a Spanish investigation into doping. Armstrong, as the American is fond of reminding anyone who will listen, never failed any drug test.

The defence case was hardly helped when Walsh, asked about the allegations in his book, said that he had little direct evidence to back up his allegations and it was "all circumstantial". The paper duly lost the pre-trial skirmish, and has now agreed to settle. "The *Sunday Times* has confirmed to Mr Armstrong that it never intended to accuse him of being guilty of taking any performance enhancing drugs and sincerely apologised for any such impression," it says.

Walsh left the *Sunday Times* in March, a move entirely unconnected with the potentially ruinous libel action. After making a career out of taking the moral high ground in his columns against sports cheats, he is now working with jockey Kieren Fallon – who on Monday this week was charged with "conspiracy to defraud" following his arrest during Inspector Knacker's investigation into alleged race-fixing.

Fallon, it need hardly be said, denies any wrongdoing.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

GOD forbid that cynicism should infect the free and fair tone of this column, but looking at the recent round of job appointments in classical music it does seem that musicos have yet to grasp the otherwise accepted fact that insider trading is not, on the whole, a Good Idea.

Take English National Opera where, having ousted the pushy but rich banker Martin Smith as chairman, they've been searching for a successor. During the interregnum, and in ultimate charge of the search (which involved the setting up of sub-committees and engagement of professional headhunters but remained an activity accountable to the board), was the pushy but rich management consultant Vernon Ellis in his capacity as acting chairman. And who have the committees and headhunters now appointed? Yes, you've got it: Vernon Ellis. Well, it saves changing the letterhead. And as the man already on the spot, he at least knows the extent to which the chalice he's accepting is poisoned.

For a worse example of dodgy management manoeuvres, however, go to Cadogan Hall off Sloane Square. Someone should. For two years now this former church has been in business as a concert hall: expensively refurbished, with a reasonable acoustic and, you would have thought, potential. But it's floundering. It hasn't been well-marketed. It lacks a sense of purpose. And although it got some profile by negotiating a residency agreement with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, that very deal tied it in with the uncertain future of London's weakest symphonic ensemble: a band whose conventional programmes clogged the schedules and blocked dates that could otherwise have been made available for more interesting projects.

The resulting conflicts were one reason the Hall very quickly lost its manager, Kevin Dennett, who resigned last Christmas. And since then, as it's been hard to find a successor, the job has been split in two: general manager and artistic director. Advising the Hall on the selection of candidates has been Ian Maclay, boss of the RPO. And the result? Maclay has advised the Hall to appoint *him* to the artistic directorship. In addition, of course, to his continuing RPO post.

MEANWHILE the record industry (as always) takes some beating when it comes to musical chairs. The other week it was announced that the brave and, in artistic terms at least, successful Warner Classics label was to be peremptorily axed by its parent company, the big, bullish Time Warner operation, for whom classical music is of no interest because it doesn't make enough money.

For Warner Classics artists – who range from Daniel Barenboim and Karita Mattila to the young British violinist Daniel Hope – this is bad news. And it might have looked bad for Warner Classics' boss Matthew Cosgrove. But not so.

Cosgrove is moving to Deutsche Grammophon where he replaces the head of A&R Bogdan Roscic. Roscic, meanwhile, has moved to the top job at Decca, replacing its president Costa Pilavachi. And Pilavachi has just been appointed president of EMI Classics, replacing the aimiable Richard Lyttelton who's been given the boot but will no doubt turn up somewhere else. Perhaps, to complete the circle, a quiet retirement job with Time Warner?

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Church News

THERE'S another crisis taking place in the CofE, apart from all the hoo-ha about gay clergy or women bishops. The problem is deans, the men and women who run cathedrals and their governing chapters – an occupation that has provided the Trollope family with a good living over the years.

At the last count there were no fewer than eight vacancies in England and Wales, and small wonder. In recent years there has been unpleasant public washing of dirty linen at cathedrals including Lincoln, York, Ripon, St Paul's, Bradford and Westminster.

At the top of the list is poor old Westminster Abbey, still deanless 10 months after Dr Wesley Carr (*Eyes passim*) announced his retirement, and four months after his actual departure. The Downing Street appointments office is growing desperate, having gone through three shortlists so far. Four candidates have been offered the job to date and have refused.

'Gargoyle'

EYE TOLD YOU SO

THE NEWS that police have interviewed a 40-year-old patient at Broadmoor secure hospital in the light of new DNA evidence in the 1992 murder of Rachel Nickell will have come as little surprise to long-time readers of the *Eye*.

We revealed back in November 1995 that the man had been questioned by a senior detective investigating the case (see *Eye* 911). As Paul Foot noted at the time, he "denied the Nickell murder. He was asked whether he was at work on the day of the Nickell murder three years previously but could not remember. No further action was taken."

Curiously, neither the *Mail on Sunday* – which has waged a disgraceful campaign against Colin Stagg ever since he was acquitted of the murder in 1994 – nor the *News of the World*, which managed to turn a categorical denial from Stagg under the influence of a truth drug into the headline "MURDER SUSPECT MAKES AMAZING CONFESSION: I LIED ABOUT RACHEL" in 1997 – have found space to record the latest developments.

● **Enter the Paul Foot Award now – see page 35.**

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

KATE MOSS RE-EMPLOYED BY BURBERRY:
KATE, WE'RE VERY HAPPY TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH YOU AGAIN!
BECAUSE I'VE SHOWN THAT I'M SORRY?
ERM.... YES..... ....THAT'S IT!!! ERM.....
COUGH COUGH
KATE MOSS ALL OVER PAPERS AGAIN
KATE GETS LOADS OF PUBLICITY

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

WHAT's a teacher supposed to do if she fears that one of her pupils is likely to endanger himself and other children on an outdoor activities trip, but the head says she has to take him?

Former deputy head Anne Jago's response was to provide an outdoor pursuits centre with a risk assessment – for which she was dismissed for professional misconduct from a primary school in Kent.

In 2002 the 61-year-old teacher, with many years of experience and more than 30 outdoor activity trips behind her, was concerned about taking a child who had a statement of special needs because of his behaviour and received one-to-one support in the classroom.

Prior to the trip the child's violent behaviour had caused complaints from the parents of his classmates, with some threatening to bring charges of assault. On a previous trip he had tried to overturn another child's canoe. The trip would have involved the boy sleeping in a dormitory with five fellow pupils, as well as taking part in activities such as canoeing, abseiling and rock climbing.

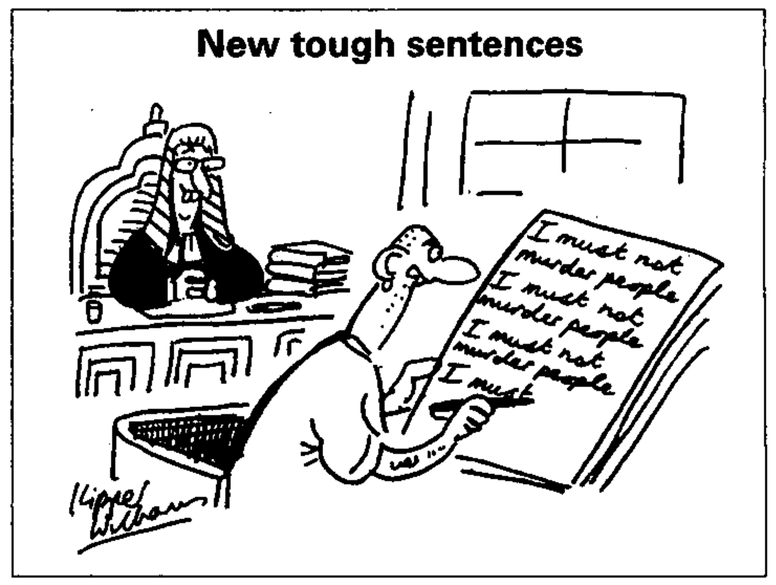
When the headteacher insisted that the child should be taken, Mrs Jago asked to be relieved of the leadership of the trip. Told that she still had to take the boy, she discussed the difficulty with Bowles Outdoor Centre in order to find a way of handling the situation safely. They asked to see a risk assessment she had drawn up, which mentioned that his behaviour was unpredictable, that he refused to follow instructions, was likely to run off and often acted recklessly with little or no regard for safety. She sent it to them.

Mrs Jago said that in sending the information she was following the advice of Kent's county physical education adviser, the county's own safety manual and government guidelines. The centre told the *Eye* that: "It is our view that Anne Jago acted entirely properly. Not only is it good practice to communicate any special needs, it is one of our booking requirements." A compromise was arranged whereby the boy could attend some of the daytime activities.

However, a disciplinary hearing held by the local education authority concluded that sending the assessment had been "insensitive and unwise" and "undermined the headteacher". Mrs Jago was found guilty of professional misconduct and lost her job.

The case dragged on, with appeals over the disciplinary process and was to have gone to employment tribunal this March but Mrs Jago was suffering from depression after losing the job she loved, and, afraid of the cost if she lost (Kent had threatened that she would have to pay them £30,000 in costs), she pulled out. At least she was free to let parents at the school know what had happened to her – because of her disappearance, some pupils had believed she had died and had planted flowers in her memory. Parents and grown-up former pupils were outraged to learn that she had been dismissed for trying to raise a safety problem and have now begun a campaign to clear her name and get a proper investigation into what happened.

The *Eye* asked Kent County Council to explain its position (as has local MP Adam Holloway). Answer came there none.



HIGH PRINCIPALS

AN employment tribunal has confirmed that the "real reason" for sacking five lecturers and the closure of the Trade Union Education Department (TUED) at Manchester College of Arts and Technology (MANCAT) was, as we suspected all along, the union activities of the staff (*Eye* 1110).

Until 2004 the department provided courses in how to be a branch, legal or health and safety rep for all unions and, not surprisingly, several of the staff were union officers in lecturers' union Natfhe (now the University and College Union). In 2003 the union had clashed with college management over allegations of bullying in the English for Speakers of Other Languages department.

The college claimed it shut the department because it was no longer viable, but the staff had offered to reduce the hours they worked in order to keep it open. The tribunal concluded that a supposed "review" of the closure plan was in fact prepared in order "to support the decision, already taken, to close the unit".

The tribunal's judgement states that MANCAT principal Peter Tavernor had "displayed open hostility towards the trade union and the trade union representatives". As the dismissing officer of the five staff he had failed to explain his actions under oath. The panel also held that management letters were "abusive and show contempt for legitimate union activities".

They also found that the college's supposed attempts to redeploy the staff in other departments were not genuine and involved the "bare minimum of effort". As firing anyone for legitimate union activity is unlawful, all the staff therefore won their cases for wrongful dismissal.

WHEN the University of Exeter closed its chemistry department amid much controversy last year and shed 149 staff, it was explained that the department was losing £3m a year thanks to the way research funding was allocated.

So obviously the university's leaders, including vice-chancellor Steve Smith, must be scrimping and saving these days to protect their other valuable departments. But what's this? The latest news release from Exeter claims that: "The Vice-Chancellor and other senior managers travelled to Thailand to present an honorary degree to her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn."

Some mistake surely? Er, no. An Exeter spokesman told the *Eye* that the cost of the trip was "four return flights and two nights accommodation" and that the trip was value for money as it involved meeting "senior Thai contacts, including the Minister for Higher Education", as well as many Exeter alumni, who might just hand over a large donation.

Nice work if you can get it.

ROAD RAGE

STACKING the odds against rail freight in favour of lorries is a tradition going back at least half a century, and despite all the fine official talk about cutting greenhouse gases and improving road safety, little has changed.

Some lorry drivers are concerned about temporary electro-magnetic interference in their vehicles' control systems. In other industries, including rail, problems of this nature would trigger official investigations, suspension of affected equipment or practices and new safety rules or standards. The official response to this disturbing fault on lorries is that new standards will be applied… but not until 2014. Possibly.

Long-distance lorry driver Peter Orr told the *Eye* how his modern truck, equipped with a hi-tech engine control unit (ECU), suffered brief loss of control as it passed through areas of interference: "Interference from powerful radio signals is knocking out the brakes and gearbox in my truck and others. In the last two years there's been a massive boost in radio aerial power. We've had serious issues with our trucks. It affects the gearbox and braking of 44-ton trucks, but it doesn't leave a memory in the computer system. It just says there's a fault on your ECU."

He said the problem was acute in France but also occurred in Britain, including at a motorway service station where there were communications masts either side of the road. He had reported the issue to the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency, the government body overseeing vehicle safety, in February 2005, but feels he was brushed off.

Vosa refused to tell the *Eye* how many drivers or businesses had reported the problem to it. On its testing programme for interference, Vosa said: "Vosa does not currently do any tests on electromagnetic interference for vehicle systems such as gearbox controllers. There are EC type-approval directives on the subject but they are not currently part of the mandatory EC type-approval requirements for the registration of any class of motor vehicle other than private cars and motorcycles. However, part of the type-approval requirement for anti-lock braking systems usually fitted to heavy goods vehicles requires that these systems only are not adversely affected by magnetic or electrical fields, although it does not reference directive standards. Many of the goods vehicles sold in UK now are type approved elsewhere in the EC."

Which in English means that nobody bothered to define minimum standards which trucks have to meet to ensure the systems controlling brakes and gearboxes are immune from electromagnetic interference.

Vosa added: "For the future, EMC [electromagnetic compatibility] testing for all vehicle systems as well as the existing anti-lock braking system is likely to become a mandatory requirement for type approval for heavy goods vehicles, potentially from 2014."

In the last decade, thousands of new rail carriages have been kept waiting in sidings while engineers demonstrated that they met the relevant safety standards. Safety approval overseas, including in EU countries, is not accepted as safety approval for British tracks: new rail vehicles must have thicker windscreens than the European standard, for example. Rail safety standards are so stringent that new track maintenance machines, intended to make only occasional journeys to and from work sites, had to be fitted with demountable horns so the decibel level could be checked every month in a laboratory, to ensure the horns weren't softer or louder than the prescribed standard.

Such are the safety standards in an industry with segregated rights of way. Road vehicles run through residential streets, pass schools and share routes with pedestrians and cyclists, but applying stringent safety standards there is just too difficult, apparently.

'Hedgehog'

"One for my baby and one for the road"

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

RIGHT IDIOTS

THE PHALANGE of new BNP councillors in Barking and Dagenham seem to be finding the nuts-and-bolts of democracy difficult to master.

At a meeting of the council last month, 10 of the party's 11 councillors failed to vote for a measure they had themselves proposed. BNP councillor Richard Barnbrook, leader of the far-right opposition to Labour on B&D, had moved that the council's constitution be changed to condemn "discrimination" against "the indigenous majority". But when the vote was called, only one BNP councillor raised a hand in favour. With hoots of derision echoing from the public gallery, Barnbrook unsuccessfully pleaded that the vote should be taken again.

So why didn't they vote for their own proposal? BNP councillors aren't the brightest stars in the firmament, but sticking a hand in the air on cue shouldn't be that difficult, even for them. It seems that their attention had wandered during the meeting and they weren't listening when the vote was called.

One must try to be sympathetic. In comparison to getting lagered up and looking for a punch-up with the Pakis, day-to-day local government must seem a dull old affair.

ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

SOUTHWARK council's former deputy leader Catherine Bowman, booted out by the voters on 4 May, has landed a nice new job as an "associate" at the lobbying and PR outfit Media Strategy, which is run by John Major's former press secretary Charles "Smoothie" Lewington.

According to *PR Week*, the former Lib-Dem councillor "will concentrate on the agency's work for Oceancrest, a consortium that is bidding to redevelop the Elephant & Castle district in London".

Ms Bowman has been familiar with Oceancrest for some time. The consortium, which consists of Blackfriars Investments, Elliott Bernard, the Lefrak Organisation, Royal London asset management and Bank of Scotland, submitted its bid for the £1.5bn Elephant job in April last year – when Ms Bowman, as well as being Southwark's deputy leader, was "executive member" for regeneration and economic development, in charge of regeneration schemes in the borough, including that at Elephant & Castle.

This cosy arrangement is unlikely to cause any embarrassment to Bowman or to Media Strategy, which also includes Southwark council among its clients. Last year Lewington's outfit resigned from the lobbying industry's toothless "regulator", the Association of Professional Political Consultants (*Eye* 1138), rather than take a slap on the wrist after it hired Lord O'Neill of Clackmannan – formerly Labour MP Martin O'Neill, chair of the trade and industry select committee – as a member of its advisory board, in defiance of the APPC's code of conduct, which prohibits financial arrangements between companies and politicians or their advisers.

● THE hairdressers of Bath are all a-flutter following a move by Bath and North-east Somerset council (Banes) to stop them giving customers free alcoholic drinks while they're having their locks shorn. Bath's hairdressers have been dishing out free plonk since the days of periwigs, but tradition cuts no ice with the jobsworths of Banes, who are writing to all salons in the district in order to stamp out the depraved practice. The council has invoked the Licensing Act 2003 to stop, er, drunken louts spilling out of salons onto the streets. Those streets are already awash with urine and vomit of an evening (*Eye* 1093) because the council has done nothing to limit the ever-increasing number of pubs and bars – yet all-of-a-sudden a hairdresser giving a customer a warm glass of wine without an expensive licence is a step too far. Drinking in the last chance salon, presumably.

FAST WAY TO BLOW £40m

WHEN Lt-Col "Tex" Pemberton, the West Sussex county council cabinet member for highways, won an award for "outstanding individual contribution to transport" at the National Transport Awards last year, he was duly modest.

"It is similar to being nominated for an Oscar," he told local hacks, while explaining that he was especially proud of his involvement in the FastWay link, a satellite-navigated "guided busway" between the towns of Crawley and Horley and Gatwick airport.

Alas, the shine quickly started to come off Tex's achievement. A month after the awards the council admitted that FastWay, a 15-mile, £27m, glorified bus lane, was £6m over-budget. In December, an independent report by neighbouring East Sussex CC found that a further £3m had been squandered. It identified failures including the fact that the financial officer on the project was a trainee accountant and that staff hid overspends and ignored budget limits. These problems would, perhaps, have been noticed earlier had the FastWay steering group, led by Tex, paid closer attention to the scheme's financial position.

When FastWay was eventually completed, the final bill for West Sussex and its "partners" – Surrey CC, Crawley BC, Reigate BC, BAA, BA and the DETR – was £39.8m. That's £2.65m per mile, making it far-and-away the most expensive bus lane in the UK. Alas the huge cost is not its only failing.

In September a FastWay driver went public to complain that bosses were creating impossible timetables that forced drivers to exceed the speed limit, making an accident "inevitable". Sure enough a FastWay bus ploughed into a house in Bewbush a month later, embedding itself in the lounge.

But at least the "smart choice for travel" is now

efficiently whizzing thousands of people around the Gatwick area? Not quite. A survey carried out over two days by Horley Residents Association last month found that the average number of passengers on each "exciting new bus" was, er, one.

WALKER'S CRISPED

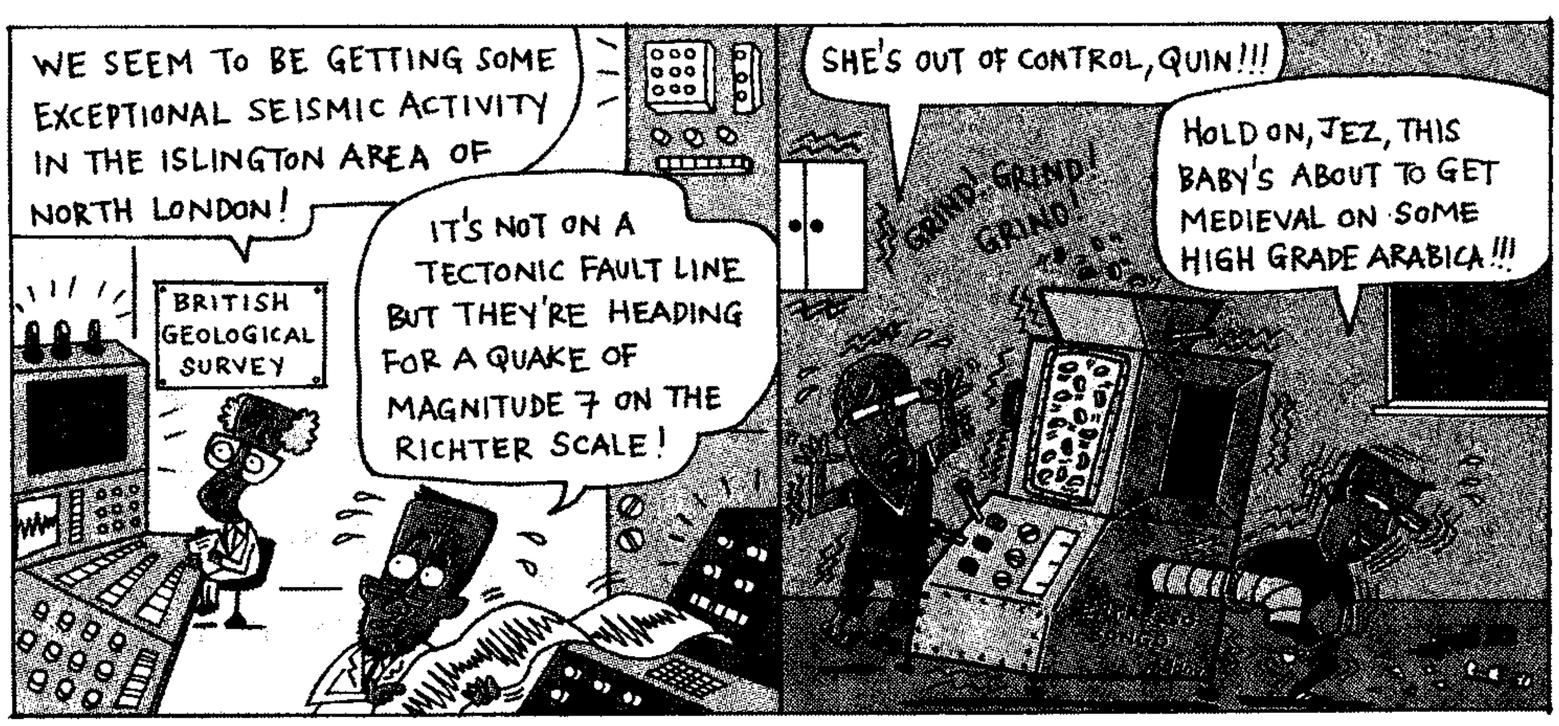
MIDDLESBROUGH Labour councillor Ken Walker was something of a stalwart of this column in his years as council leader between 1995 and 2002.

There was the time he paid the band at his wedding from the till at the town hall bar, then forgot to return the money (*Eye* 960). There was the time an employment tribunal ruled he had unlawfully made 354 workers redundant, which coincided with a big rise in his own allowance (*Eye* 988). And there was the time the Lady Mayor, Pat Walker, who happened to be married to Ken, got a £40,000 new Jag (*Eye* 1048). All this, however, was completely tickety-boo with the Labour party. None of it caused Ken a moment's bother.

In recent months, however, the Labour party has become deeply disenchanted with Ken Walker. He is the councillor for Middlesbrough's Gresham ward, where some 1,500 homes have been targeted for demolition under the government's crazed "Pathfinder" scheme which involves spending £1.2bn to demolish 400,000 terraced homes in the north by 2008 (*Eyes passim*). Most people in Gresham are strongly opposed to Pathfinder. They would like to see money spent on refurbishing rather than demolishing their homes, which they feel will destroy their community. As their elected representative, Ken Walker has publicly and frequently spoken out on their behalf over Pathfinder. First he was suspended by the Labour party for doing so, then he was deselected as a candidate for the 2007 council elections. Now, for failing to give an undertaking that he won't stand against Labour next year, he has been kicked out the party.

As "Donnygate" showed, the northern region of the Labour party takes a relaxed view of financial shenanigans – but if councillors actually try to do the right thing by the people they represent, God help them!

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


WE SEEM TO BE GETTING SOME EXCEPTIONAL SEISMIC ACTIVITY IN THE ISLINGTON AREA OF NORTH LONDON!
BRITISH GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
IT'S NOT ON A TECTONIC FAULT LINE BUT THEY'RE HEADING FOR A QUAKE OF MAGNITUDE 7 ON THE RICHTER SCALE!
SHE'S OUT OF CONTROL, QUIN!!!
GRIND! GRIND! GRIND!
HOLD ON, JEZ, THIS BABY'S ABOUT TO GET MEDIEVAL ON SOME HIGH GRADE ARABICA!!!

● SAD AD of the Week: "Stuck for a present? Birthday or anniversary or just to say 'Thank You'. Here's an idea. Enrol your relation or friend in Chelmsford Conservatives!" – Essex Tories' "In Touch" newsletter.

CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

"In our review of The Who at Leeds University, page 36, June 19, we attributed to Pete Townshend the exclamation, 'You are wank!' [sic]. We are assured that what he actually told the audience was 'We are all back'. Apologies."

– *Grauniad*, 21 June

NOOKS and CORNERS

NOT wishing to give the impression that Liverpool is uniquely careless of its historic buildings [*Eyes passim*], I must emphasise that its old rival, Manchester, does its best to vandalise even without the encouragement of being European City of Culture.

For some years now Manchester has encouraged commercial development of any and every sort to override any other considerations – hence the crude redevelopment of the old Free Trade Hall into a vulgar hotel and the new towers rising all over the city. It was significant that the "winner" of the BBC's first *Restoration* series was the closed and decaying Victoria Baths, which turned out to be owned (and neglected) by the city council.

Now the council seems keen to dispose of a building designed by the great architect of our Houses of Parliament: the Unitarian Chapel in Upper Brook Street, which was built in 1836-39.It was the work of Sir Charles Barry, who had already designed what is now the Manchester City Art Gallery. At the time, he had just won the competition for the New Palace of Westminster, and in Manchester – as in London – he may well have enjoyed the assistance of the young Welby Pugin with the Gothic detail. Built of sandstone, the chapel is in the Early English style and originally had a single-volume interior with galleries.

The Unitarian Chapel later became a Welsh Baptist church; more recently it was used by something called the Islamic Academy, which occupied the adjacent Sunday school. The church itself has been abandoned for 40 years, and the council has watched it fall into ruin. It is owned by the council because it was acquired by the old Greater Manchester Council to make way for a motorway which, mercifully, was averted in public inquiry.

The building is listed, at grade II*, but has never been properly maintained and trees have now grown so densely round the west end that they obscure the entrance, although scaffolding props up the walls and roof. Had it been privately owned, the council no doubt might have served a repairs notice.

Barry's Unitarian Chapel is now on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk register and is considered the most vulnerable historic building in the city. The city council seems recently to have woken up to its deteriorating condition and has just removed most of the roof. Maintaining – most dubiously – that the structure is beyond repair, it is now considering demolition – but by using "dangerous structure" legislation rather than by the normal listed building consent system – always the ploy of the most thuggish local authorities.

The council also seems aware that the site is more valuable if cleared. What it chooses to ignore is that the law requires that a redundant listed building must be advertised for sale before demolition can be permitted. Several people have expressed interest in acquiring the chapel over the years, but Manchester City Council has never responded.

When Cllr Graham Shaw (Lib Dem) asked for a report on how the chapel had been allowed to fall into such a state, and on what might be done to save it, this was rejected by the ruling Labour group. Yet the building need not be doomed: the Heritage Trust for the North West has offered to enter into a "back to back agreement" in which the building preservation trust takes on the chapel for a nominal sum, repairs and finds a new use for it. All that is required is for Manchester City Council to stop behaving like a sleazy developer and start behaving responsibly towards a fine listed building by a great British architect.

How pleased we are
To welcome National Trust
Too long it's waited in the wings
Swindon treasures many splendid things

SO BEGINS a heart-warming poem distributed by the National Trust to its staff in their exciting new headquarters in Swindon. How cheering that the trust's Gadarene flight from the capital to an office block in the former railway town should have generated such artistic expression to compensate for the resignations and demoralisation of so many dedicated and expert staff.

The poem, however, has not been penned by the National Trust's highly paid director-general Fiona Reynolds, but by Swindon's Community Poet, Tony Hillier.

Here are some more verses:

We've so much with you to share
Like Tabernacle and Mechanics about which we care
We welcome trust, too oft we're thrust
Into cultural void, could get some annoyed

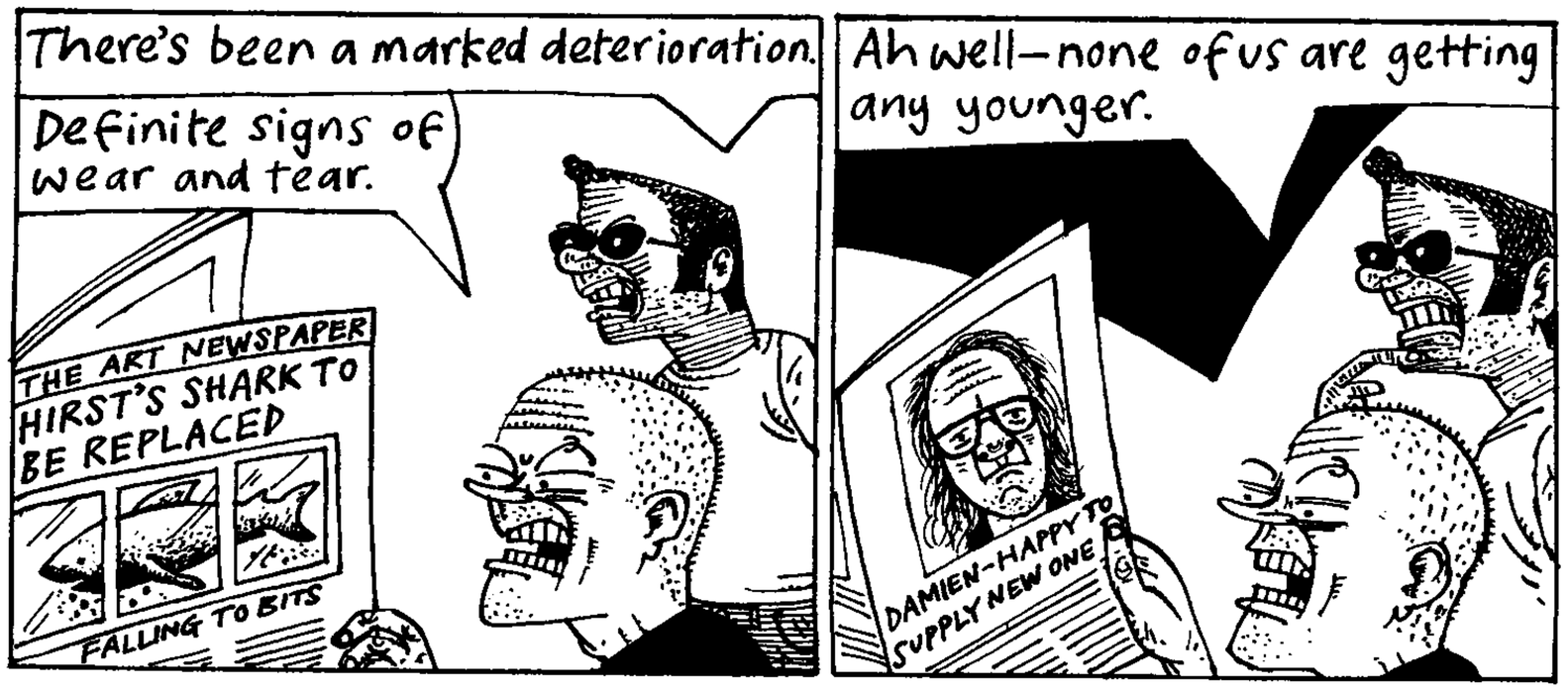
Instead, Swindon energy as one
Moved into festivals of fun
And dawn maypole literati
Trust, you'll add to Swindon's share, of glitterati

(That's enough bad poetry. Ed.)

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


There's been a marked deterioration.
Definite signs of wear and tear.
THE ART NEWSPAPER
HIRST'S SHARK TO BE REPLACED
FALLING TO BITS
Ah well—none of us are getting any younger.
DAMIEN—HAPPY TO SUPPLY NEW ONE

Letters

Queen's Birthday Honours

Sir,

I find the front cover of 1161 in bad taste considering the recent shooting of innocent people by public servants.

E. SAY.

...I must protest the cover of issue 1161 was tasteless and UNKIND.

I am a great supporter of Private Eye and, while all politicians are fair game, I think HM the Queen is NOT, especially on the occasion of her 80th birthday.

HERMYONE FREMLIN-KEY (MRS).

...Is "Here's a present from Prince Charles" (guardsman shoots Queen) supposed to be high satire?

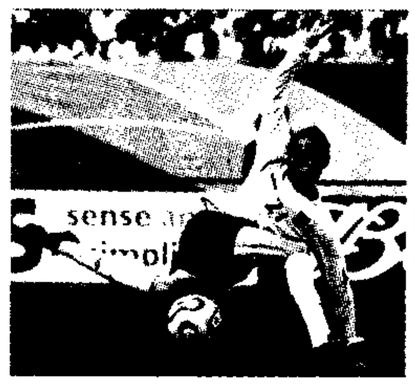
I think my eight-year-old could do better than that.

ROBIN PETHERBRIDGE.

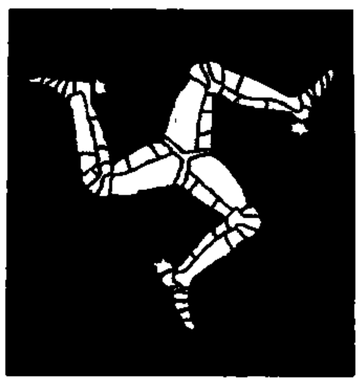
... Front page – SILLY, VERY POOR TASTE. Cartoon page 5 – fine.

PETER BOORMAN (now no longer a purchaser of Private Eye).

Lookalike



Emblem



Crouch

Sir,

Are they related?

Yours,
CHRIS LAWRENCE,

Oslo.

C'mon you Stars & Stripes

Sir,

Re: The cover, issue 1160.

Is Private Eye influencing the prime minister and government? Making a guest appearance on the Radio 5 Live World Cup 606 show he was asked by a caller who he had been most impressed by so far at the World Cup.

He replied: "Well, I would have to say America."

I think we should be told.

Yours in sport,
PETER MERRETT,

London.

Rallying cry

Sir,

I am an enthusiastic subscriber to the Eye. I do not think that your Israel/Nuremberg joke (1161, p5) is funny, however; I find it rather tasteless. While I endorse neither, yet support the rights of the press of doing either, I wonder why it seems so much more acceptable to make such jokes than reprinting the Danish Muslim cartoons (which at least had political relevance)?

Sincerely,
DR KREIL,

Vienna.

Badgering Muckspreader

Sir,

Whilst I wouldn't want to discourage any involvement in science, Muckspreader's attempts regarding bovine TB were pitiful (Down on the Farm, Eye 1160).

The past 20 years have seen major changes in animal husbandry and farming practices, making 1980s data largely irrelevant to today's problems. The scientific consensus is that cattle-to-cattle transmission is a far greater factor than badger-to-cattle transmission, most likely causing 80 percent of bovine TB cases. I suggest you read the "Natural England Confederation Response to Defra Consultation on Badger Culling" (English Nature, 2006), which details how ineffective a cull would be without tackling problems within farming practices.

Muckspreader also seems to be a bit confused regarding the wild claim of badgers condemned to a "lingering death". The truth is that the vast majority of infected badgers are only asymptomatic carriers, and suffer nothing at all.

CHARLOTTE ROSE MEnvSci.

...Even researchers with 20 years' experience can't tell which badgers have BTB. Results from post mortems show fewer than 10 percent of those thousands killed in the hotspot BTB areas have BTB let alone suffer from it.

D WILLIAMS.

...The bovine TB figures for the first quarter of the year, showing a 29 percent drop in cases, have been on the Defra website for well over a month, and can be found by anyone with a computer and two minutes to spare. Significantly, this drop follows no "culling" of badgers – just the belated (and still half-arsed) addressing of cattle TB testing after the disruption caused by BSE and foot and mouth.

JEREMY WADE.

...Muckspreader complains badger numbers have "exploded" "to a level nature could no longer tolerate". Nature has absorbed their numbers pretty well since they were protected. Nature herself has, of course, shrunk rather dramatically under the relentless assault of, er, farmers (and their pesticide-promoting agrochemical friends), thus reducing supplies of the badger's favourite snack, earthworms.

Human TB was long ago controlled by vaccination. Perhaps Muckspreader could explain why, instead of whingeing about badgers and wasting money on ill-conceived studies, DEFRA and the farming industry haven't developed a vaccine for the bovine version?

ANTHONY CHEKE.

Lookalike

Big Brother contestant

Venus

Sir,

Have any of your readers noticed the remarkable similarity between the poor woman with the deformed breasts in the Big Brother house and the Willendorf Venus. As they seem to be of a similar age it's possible they are related.

Yours,
GRAHAM McCALLUM,

Via email.

Fisk analysis

Sir,

What is it about the Eye and Robert Fisk? Fisk is one of the most important investigative journalists of his generation and, as with Paul Foot, he tends to annoy the rich and powerful as a result. Normally the Eye would be 100 percent behind such a journalist but instead you snipe. Fisk got it wrong over Zarqawi, he was still alive until the US decided to execute him rather than put him on trial. Surely, however, the point that Fisk was making was the Zarqawi was not all that central to the dreadful violence that occurs in Iraq. And the sad fact that it continues unabated after his death suggests that Fisk had a point.

Regards,
KEITH FLETT,

Via email.

Battle lines

Sir,

*Tom Carter (Letters, 1161) states that the Battle of Kosovo was on 28 June 1389. In fact, it was on both June 15 **and** 28 June, depending on whether you are using the Julian Calendar (Old Style) or Gregorian Calendar (New Style). As the Gregorian Calendar was not created until 1582 it is probably more accurate to state that the Battle of Kosovo occurred on 15 June 1389 (OS).*

NEIL ROSS,

Via email.

"Now do you believe the South needs this hosepipe ban?"

Forums forever?

Sir,

It may be the case that patients' forums ("Piqued district, Eye 1161) "are generally regarded as a dead loss". It is not the case that they "are in any event about to be abolished".

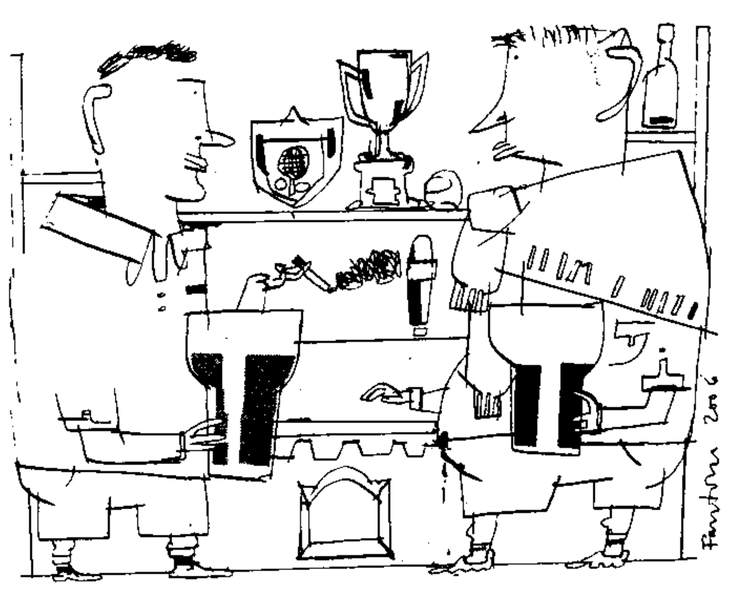
Like community health councils before them, patients' forums have been set up by statute and can only be abolished by primary legislation. This takes time.

At the time of writing there has been no announcement of an intention to legislate to abolish patients' forums. The last time round the government expected to achieve abolition of community health councils 20 months after making the announcement; in fact, it took twice as long! Even that might not have been achieved so soon without the remarkable political skills of the relevant junior minister, Hazel Blears, who is no longer available for a repeat performance, having moved on to higher things.

Yours faithfully,
DONALD ROY,

London SW15.

Scenes You Seldom See



"I get loads of tickets for Wimbledon through corporate hospitality, but I always pass them on to people who are seriously interested"

Wrong numbers

Sir,

With regards to your book review of jPod, someone has got their numbers in a twist – there simply cannot be 8363 primes between 1000 and 10000 as stated (hopefully quoting Coupland rather than plucking a number out of thin air). Of the whole numbers between 1,000 and 10,000, the evens can be ignored being divisible by 2, leaving 4,500, which is then reduced further. Just to demonstrate how truly sad I am, I calculate there are 1,061 primes within that range, so there aren't even 8,363 non-primes.

I'll try and get a life now.

Regards,
CATHERINE PALMER,

Via email.

* Apologies for the cock-up. It was 3,363 primes between 10,000 and 100,000. Ed.

Sir,

HP Sauce this week, and Backbiter reckons that £50m is 1/40th of £20bn. It isn't, it's 1/400th! (50x40=2000; 50x400=20000).

Does Backbiter by any chance work in his day job for the Home Office, programming their Adelphi system?

IAN WESTBROOK,

Via email.

*Yes – you're correct. We're wrong. Ed.

Going nuclear

Sir,

I feel compelled for the first time to write in order to correct the comments of Mr Robertson (Eye 1161). I suggest that he should first read the reports before dismissing their findings out of hand. The UNSCEAR report from 2000 states: "There is no evidence of a major public health impact related to ionizing radiation 14 years after the Chernobyl accident. No increases in overall cancer incidence or mortality that could be associated with radiation exposure have been observed."

The "horrifying and bewildering array of inflictions" described are to be found elsewhere, the frequency of these conditions is the important piece of information, UNSCEAR making it clear that there is no increased chance of this happening in Minsk.

If we are not to build nuclear power stations let's at least have a good reason instead of scaremongering. However nuclear power is still the cheapest option for our energy future, even exhibiting fewer carbon emissions than the much-touted wind and solar energies (National Geographic).

Keep up the good work,
GAVIN BISHOP,

Via email.

The plane truth

Sir,

Martin Garvey's letter (issue 1161) states that it was an inherent design fault which caused the accident which killed John Denver. In fact, the fault was introduced by the aircraft builder, the aircraft being home-built from a commercial kit. The kit designers recommended the fuel tank selector be positioned in front of the pilot, between his legs. The builder of the aircraft deliberately positioned it behind the pilot's left shoulder instead, ostensibly for safety reasons. The fuel tank selector installed was not placarded in any way, leading to possible confusion.

Mr Denver would have had to have been something of a contortionist to operate the rudder pedal, normally operated by the feet, with his shoulder as suggested by Martin Garvey. Rather, having to turn 90 degrees left in his seat to operate the fuel tank selector caused him to involuntarily push the rudder pedal with his right foot.

There were other factors, such as his unfamiliarity with the aircraft, not refuelling it before takeoff and not checking properly how much fuel was on board. The NTSB accident report did not make any recommendations regarding the design of the aircraft.

KEVIN HALL,

Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex.

Cornwall stonewalled

Sir,

Brendan McMahon's persistence (Letters, 1161) in putting forward the case for £600,000 of our money to teach a language that died out with the death of Dolly Pentreath over two hundred years ago is perhaps weakened by the lack of funding supplied in Derbyshire where he has so clearly developed this useful language to such good effect. Give every child in Cornwall an ice cream instead. It will be of more use to them.

FELIX MOORE,

Via email.

Mine of information

Sir,

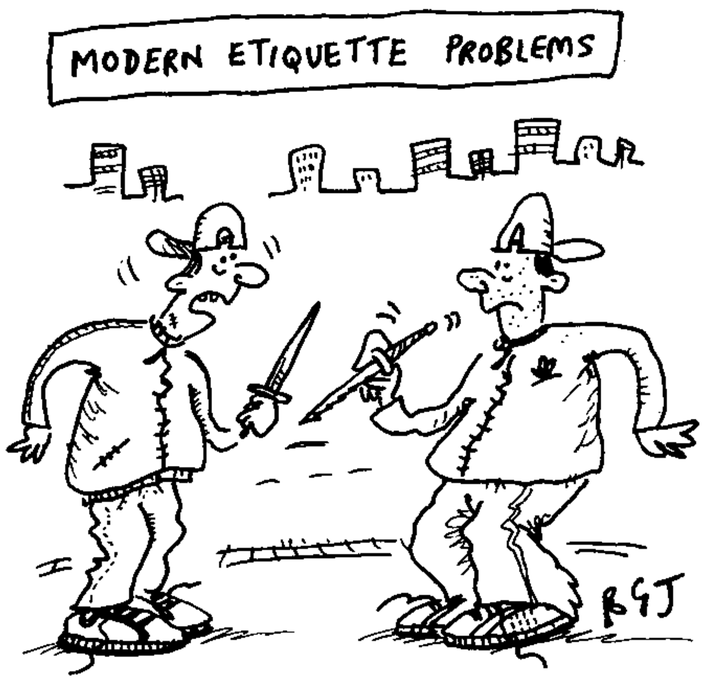
Re "Miners Shafted" from your last issue's "In The Back": does anyone care what happens to members of the UDM?

For those of your readers who know of the 1984/5 miners' strike only from their history books, these are the Thatcherite fools who knifed their fellow-workers in the back, maintaining a locally bad record going back to 1926 (Eyes passim).

It could fairly be said that these people were earning their £350 during the strike, and if they choose to cry about it, I can only recommend they stick to a decent union.

Yours etc,
ENA B. SPART (V. SHEARMAN ESQ),

Wrexham.



"Oh my God, Darren! You're holding your knife like a pen!!"

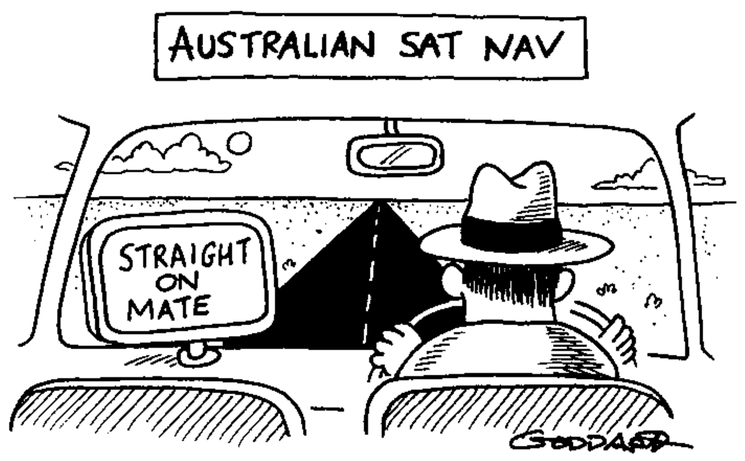
Blind error

Sir,

Dafydd Lewis (Letters, No. 1161) clearly doesn't know the difference between "clinical trials" and "double-blind experiments". MD (No. 1160, "Doing The Rounds") was talking about the impossibility of hiding from good surgeons whether they are performing a genuine procedure or not, the point of double-blind tests being that neither those giving the treatment nor those receiving it know whether they are giving or getting a placebo or the real thing (the "platinum" standard is "triple blind", when those assessing the results don't know which group is which either). The fact that surgeons know when they haven't performed an operation at all, and are just telling their patients they have, is irrelevant.

Yours methodologically,
CATHERINE ATHERTON,

Los Angeles.



WorldCupBalls

£10 paid for contributions

"Mexico are bringing on two new players so presumably they will be taking two off."
Commentator, ITV
(Roger Marsh)

"It was really difficult for us playing in the midday sun with that three o'clock kick-off."
DAVID BECKHAM, BBC1
(Johnny Cunningham)

"They [England] might do a Greece. Like Greece did."
TERRY BUTCHER, Radio 5 Live
(Ian Davis)

"We wanted to nullify Ecuador and win the game and we achieved all three."
STEVE McLAREN, Sky Sports website
("Jamie")

"Beckham has one of the best passes in the game – providing there's another player at the end of it."
Commentator, ITV
(Michael Charalambous)

"That's what I like about his [Torres'] movement – standing still..."
DAVID PLEAT
(Vanessa Voysey)

"... and Ukraine still have three fresh legs to bring on..."
Commentator, Radio 5 Live
(Mark Herron)

"The home crowd are worth half a goal to them."
LEE DIXON, Football Focus
(Alexander Goodwin)

"England have got a great team, from Paul Robinson, the goalkeeper, all the way to the defence."
CHRIS MOYLES, CBBC
(Alex Hill)

"Heavy defeat can sometimes work against you."
Commentator, Radio 5 Live
(Michael Charalambous)

SOLUTIONS

"Soil Solutions International: a new world in reinforced soil" – *earth*

"Mainline Water Solutions: Quality drinking water systems" – *water*

"Space Air Solutions: Solutions to all your home air quality issues" – *air*

"Timbmet: Your responsible timber solutions provider" – *wood*

"Cemex: One of the world's largest building solutions companies" – *cement*

"Total Aero: a complete lubrication solution" – *oil*

All submitted by readers

Late and lamented

Sir,

Two significant legal facts leap from your coverage of Frederick Forsyth's reminiscences regarding the late Charles Haughey. Firstly, Mr Haughey was acquitted of all charges prosecuted against him alleging he had any involvement in the importation and distribution of arms. Secondly, you cannot defame the dead. Whilst more than happy to take full advantage of this latter fact, you should perhaps familiarise yourself with the former. I should tell you, however, that I have absolutely no intention of cancelling my subscription.

Yours sincerely,
G.P. MCHUGH,

Belfast.

Nurse, the screens!

Sir,

Dr Savin, medical director of Preventicum, thinks I am "at best unwise" to suggest that the last thing a woman with a nut allergy needs is an MRI of her brain (Letters, 1160). On the contrary, there is no wisdom in recommending MRI brain scans for people with nut allergies, nor any evidence for it. The only justification for screening for unruptured brain aneurysms is in those who have two first-degree relatives affected by subaracnoid haemorrhage, and people with the rare condition adult polycystic kidney disease (Lancet Neurology 2005;4:122-128).

My comment that only 1 in 15 unruptured aneurysms ever bleeds is not "at best a guess" (Brain 2000;123:205-221). Neither is living with an unruptured aneurysm "playing Russian roulette": there is no evidence that looking for these aneurysms and then treating them is a beneficial strategy overall, and finding an unruptured aneurysm which cannot or should not be treated leaves patients with considerable anxiety (Stroke 2002;33:440-443).

The London Preventicum clinic is a satellite of the German clinic based in the University Hospital, Essen. Funnily enough, the Department of Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology at the very same hospital published a paper on their whole body MRI screening technique and concluded that "screening MRI should not be performed outside a research setting" (Am J Roentgenol 2005;184:598-611).

The best thing Preventicum's employees could say to their clients is: "There's no scientific evidence for much of the screening we do here, but you can pay for it if you want."

DR RUSTAM AL-SHAHI, MA PhD MRCP(UK),

Western General Hospital, Edinburgh.

Letter from **New Delhi**

from Our Own Correspondent

HERE in the world's biggest democracy, we pride ourselves on the stability and continuity that sit in such sharp contrast to the coups and conflicts of our neighbours.

Of course, some things change. The British left in 1947. We no longer have royalty. Or at least we don't call them that anymore. But Sonia Gandhi, Italian-born widow of our former prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, is doing her bit to perpetuate the principle of political primogeniture.

Sonia-ji, imperious leader of the ruling Congress party and de facto prime minister, is busy grooming her cutely-dimpled son, Rahul Gandhi, for the family throne. Like his father before him, prince-in-waiting Rahul's chief qualification for the top job is being the son of his prime minister-mother.

His pedigree is impressive. His great-grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru was independent India's first prime minister, who was succeeded, after a brief hiatus, by his grandmother, Indira Gandhi. Father Rajiv, to whom he bears a close resemblance, followed Indira after her assassination in 1984. After Rajiv was murdered by a suicide bomber in the early 1990s, rudderless Congressmen – adrift without a Gandhi-Nehru at the helm – turned pleadingly in 1998 to his widow Sonia to head the party.

Ceasar-like Sonia turned down the prime ministerial crown after recording a surprising victory for the Congress Party-led coalition in the 2004 general elections and gave the job to Manmohan Singh instead. But Singh is a weak leader who does what Madam tells him to.

A determined Mummy catapulted Rahul to centre stage by appointing him campaign manager for her recent by-election in Rae Bareilly in northern Uttar Pradesh state, the outcome of which was a foregone conclusion. Mater's record win by more than 400,000 votes was attributed to Rahul. Obsequious Congress Party members on cue demanded an enhanced role for the dauphin. But he too turned down the offer – for now.

Mummy-ji wants him to be Congress Party general-secretary. That will put him at the centre of politics and influence peddling, and help him bolster his CV and deal with any opposition to realising his destiny. She will then orchestrate vociferous demands from within the Congress for Rahul to succeed her as party president ahead of the 2009 general elections. Many will urge her to stay, but Sonia-ji will "regretfully" abdicate in Rahul's favour, making a big deal of passing the baton to the younger generation.

This could play well. Some 65 percent of India's population of more than 1.25bn are below the age of 30. Assuming victory by a Congress-led coalition, in three years' time Rahul will smoothly ascend India's democratic throne as the latest model to roll off the Nehru-Gandhi production line.

So the plan goes. But there is a drawback. Like his father, Rahul is simply not up to the job. A self-professed computer specialist who has lived most of his adult life abroad, mostly in the US and Britain, he is pleasant enough socially. But according to his associates, India's prospective PM is intellectually limited. Like his father, there are questions over his academic achievements at a college in Delhi, and then later at Cambridge and Harvard, where admission apparently rested more on lineage than personal brilliance.

Elected to parliament from the safe Gandhi family pocket borough of Amethi, some 300 miles north of Delhi in northern Uttar Pradesh state in 2004, he has spoken just once in parliament – and then from a prepared text about youth empowerment, something so inconsequential no one remembers the detail. He remains a poor orator, not entirely at ease in Hindi, embarrassingly fumbling for coherence.

But being a bit dim has hardly held back politicians even in some of the most developed democracies, has it?

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "It's a very bizarre crime, and may well be a first," Hugh Graf of the Brownard County Sheriff's Office told reporters in Miami. "Mr Winkoff called randomly at apartments in the Lauderdale Lakes neighbourhood, and told any women who answered that the North Miami Hospital had sent him to perform free door-to-door breast examinations in local homes. He carried a black medical bag, and said he was a doctor. And because he stressed that the tests were free, dozens of women willingly let him examine their breasts, before someone finally grew suspicious and called us in."

Graf was speaking following the arrest of seventy-six-year-old Philip Winkoff, a part-time shuttle driver from Coconut Creek. "He comes across as a very nice person, and the medical bag made him seem genuine, though it actually belongs to his wife, who's a registered nurse. Several of the women he called on were Haitian maids, who don't speak much English and don't have medical insurance in this country, so I suppose the chance of some free healthcare seemed just too good for them to turn down."

The boyfriend of one of the victims later told reporters that "he was so old, he didn't seem like a threat. You couldn't imagine an old man could come into your house and do something like that." *(Miami Herald, 20/4/06. Spotter: Ian J. Baillie)*

– ● –

● *"Astronomical Toilet Paper is a novel tool for the popularisation of astronomy, by capturing the attention of a captive audience. Experience the vastness of the universe in the stillness of your own bathroom. Astronomy is an everyday matter, and so is using the lavatory. And now, our beautifully-decorated ATP can bring the fruits of astronomy to the daily life of the public.*

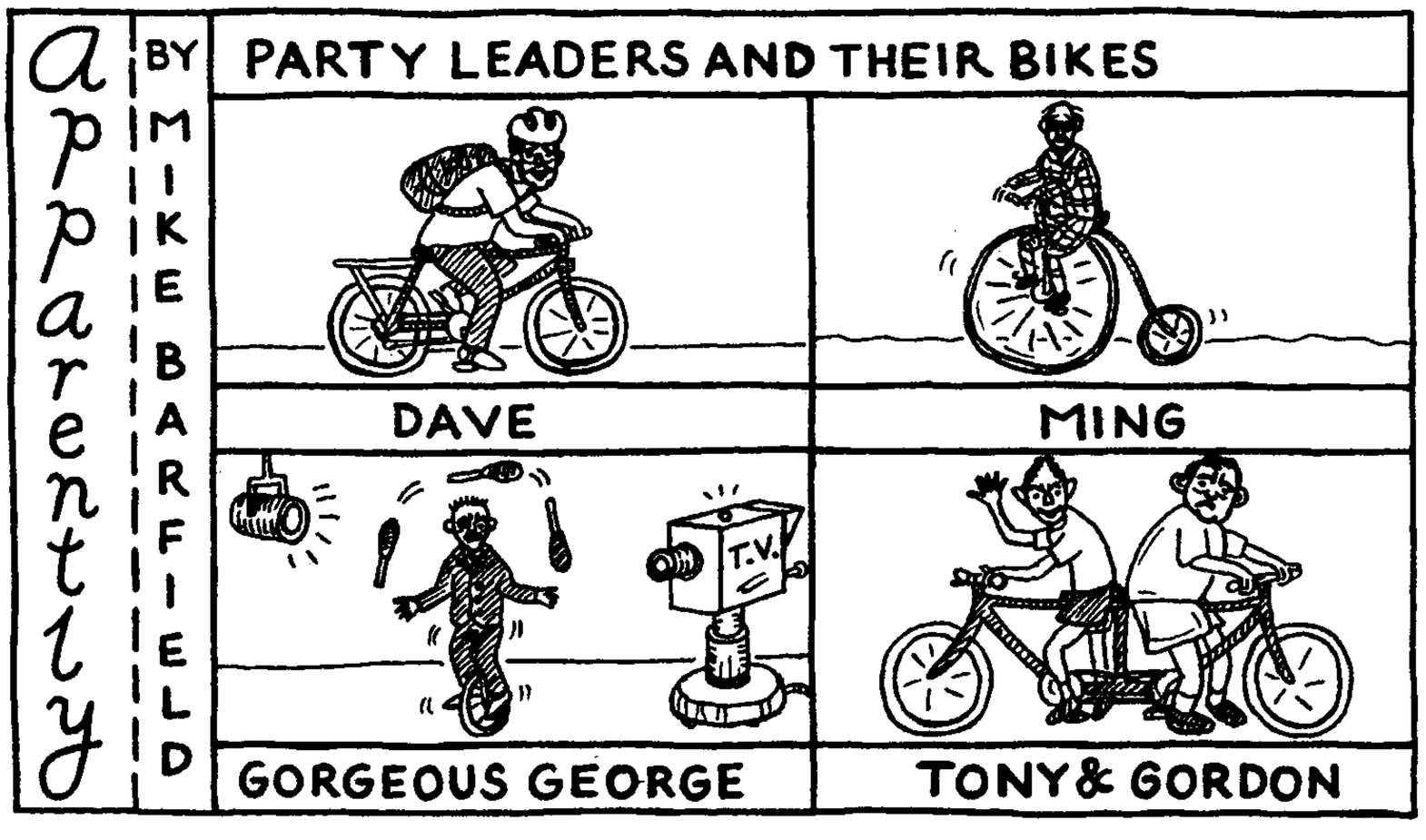
Each roll is printed with the life cycle of a star, in a repeating pattern of 70cms in length. It begins with a molecular cloud, which becomes a baby star with a planetary system, then a planetary nebula, a black hole, and finally a red dwarf. In your own toilet, we would like you to feel the expansions and contractions of the universe, and realise that astronomy is a backyard matter in itself, just like your visits to the lavatory." (Advertisement in The Daily Yomiuri, 24/2/06. Spotter: Stacy Williams)

– ● –

● "My boss is passionate about extreme vacations," Irina Lapenkova told reporters in Moscow, "and goes on expensive holidays to exotic destinations in South America, Africa, even Iraq. I wanted to impress him, but didn't have the money to visit Argentina, until I heard about Perseus-Tours and their 'virtual vacations'. Now I can tell colleagues all about the stylish night clubs and restaurants I visited in Buenos Aires, and the subtleties of Argentinean life, and turn them green with envy, even though I never left Moscow. I can even dance the tango, and the boss now involves me in much more interesting projects. Believe me, it's the best holiday I've never had."

The president of Perseus-Tours, Dmitry Popov, later explained the rationale behind his rapidly-expanding company, which specialises in fictitious vacations. "I started organising these fake voyages last year, initially for about 30 clients a month, but turnover has already doubled this year. Lots of young Russian professionals want to boost their social status by boasting about exciting foreign holidays. But they don't earn enough to spend $3,000 on a luxury holiday in Argentina, or a piranha hunt in the Amazon, so they sign up for my imitation

trips instead. For $400, we'll provide them with a sunbed, airline ticket stubs, a receipt for a four-star hotel in Rio, some Brazilian souvenirs, and fake photographs of themselves in the rain forest. But we don't just give them documentation. We also give them an intensive two-week course, teaching them about everything they would have experienced if they'd actually gone, so they'll be able to convince work colleagues that they really went. We'll even give you a snake bite wound in the arm, if you want added realism. Bookings this year are so good that I'm having to send someone to South America for real next week, to replenish my stock of authentic souvenirs." *(Mail and Guardian [South Africa], 27/4/06. Spotter: Keith Krut)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo (and I don't mean goodbye!),

I have chosen as my theme this week that very important word 'renewal'.

It's the key to everything I want to do for the parish during my remaining time as your vicar.

What does it mean? Well, let's start off by saying what it doesn't mean.

It certainly doesn't mean changing things just for the sake of changing things!

No. Nor does it necessarily mean that things need to be changed at all!

Nor does it mean that things have to be new!

No way!

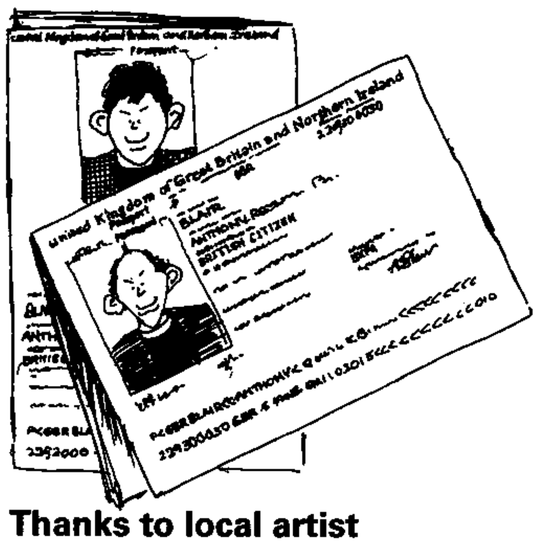
How can I explain it? The word is 're-new' – i.e. something that is being made new again!

And doesn't that mean that, in order to be made new again, you have to be old first?

Think of it like your passport. When you 're-new' it (every 10 years), it isn't exactly a new passport, is it?

It may look different. You yourself may look quite a lot older after 10 years (particularly if you've been running a very busy parish with, frankly, not very much help from certain people!).

But essentially your passport is still about you, the same old you that your last one was about.



Thanks to local artist Mr. De la Nougerede

Except that it has been 'renewed', so that you're all ready for the next 10 years!

Or think of another example. One that we are all familiar with from our church life. I mean 'renewing' your marriage vows.

You don't vow to marry someone else, do you? (Unless of course you are Mr Blunkett or Mr Cook, our late organist, or Mr Prescott, before he got caught!)

No, the whole point of 'renewing' your vows is that you pledge to stay with the same person!

And that is what I want this parish to do – to 'renew' its commitment to supporting its chosen 'partner', in good times or bad times (not that in my case there are any 'bad times'!), in sickness and in health (though there's never been a question about my health, as you will see below!).

As for 'richer' and 'poorer', in this parish, as you know, we've abolished poverty – so the question doesn't arise!

Which brings me to my third point about this important word – the fact that it comes from the Old Greek: 'renos' (staying on) and 'evalos', meaning 'for all eternity'.

Isn't that a message which certain parishioners (particularly the friends of our treasurer Mr Brown) would do well to bear in mind?

What does it say in the Good Book – "I am with you always. And even if the day should come when I am no longer with you, look for me and there I shall be, amongst you"!

And how does it go on? "Behold I am renewed, just as ye shall be also." (Gospel According To St Anthony, from the Good Renews Bible.)

And to help you keep these words of wisdom close to your hearts, I've written a special chorus for our Service of Renewal this Sunday.

"Renew, renew, renew.
That's what we have to do!
Renewal, renewal, renewal.
Just try it and you'll find you'll
Open up life's door,
And be happy – evermore!

(Repeat)

Words and music T. Blair.

Tony

Parish Postbag

A Letter From Mr Prescott of the Working Men's Club

Dear Sir,

Once again, alligators are being made regarding my recent visit to stay on the ranch of Mr Hiram J. Fastbuck of the Las Vegas Wealth Corporation. Mr Fastbuck had generositively agreed to offer me hospitalisation to discuss the possible purchasity of the Millennium Tent prior to its conversion into a 24-hour casino-cum-massage parlour. It was thereforwards perfectly proprietory for me to enjoy the felicities of Mr Fastbuck's hospitality including a delightful massage with

Yours sincerely,

John Prescott, Disgrace and Favour Villas, The Freebie Estate, Croquet Crescent.

■ **The Editor reserves the right to cut any letters for reasons of embarrassment and would like to make it clear that, in lieu of Mr Fastbuck's offer of accommodation, Mr Prescott gave a donation to charity, which he took out of parish funds. D. Hill.**

To Remember In Your Prayers

● Mr Clarke, former head of our Neighbourhood Watch, who has recently shown sad signs of galloping mental derangement, no doubt exacerbated by his drinking and his increasing bitterness towards Dr Reid, the new (and much more efficient) head of the Neighbourhood Watch. Let us all pray that Mr Clarke doesn't go downhill even more rapidly, and end up suffering the same tragic fate as Mr Cook and Mrs Mowlam. T.B.

Fit For Purpose!

Here's the vicar "running that extra mile" to raise money for one of his favourite good causes – Vicars In Need.

Says Tony, "I am a great believer in physical fitness. It keeps you on the ball and mentally alert. Not like some hopelessly overweight people with big ears and beards! I am not thinking of anyone in particular, but if the cap fits (which it won't, because you've got such big ears), then wear it! Let's be honest, Charles, you let yourself go, which is why in the end I had to let you go!"

And, talking of people who don't look particularly healthy, I rather doubt whether poor Mr Brown could run a mile (though most people would run a mile just to get away from him, especially when he pretends to know about football, or indeed anything else for that matter!).

As for Mr Prescott, can you imagine him taking part in any sport (apart from the obvious one, and no, John, I don't mean croquet!).

A "fat" lot of good he would be at "running" anything (no offence, John!). T.B.

On The Spot With The Vicar!

I send my deepest sympathy to all of our gallant footballing team, but I have a special message for the manager, Sven – why go when there is so much still to be done? Yes, you have a dull Scottish sidekick who wants the top job... but why let him take over when you could carry on and do the job so much better?! It is not too late for you to reconsider your rash decision to step down after losing a few fixtures! I say, "Stay on and 'renew' your legacy of success"!! T.B.

GLENDA JOCKSTRAP

THE EYE'S WORLD CUP WONDERGIRL!

■ **HEY MISTER!? Don't blame Sven!!? It's not the super-cool Swede's fault that England's hopes were so cruelly dashed??!? Sven did his best, no man could do more, but when the moment of truth came our lads just weren't good enough!!!? So all hail to The Magnificent Sven, let down by the Unmagnificent Eleven!!?! Geddit??!**

■ SVEN??!? What a disgrace!!?! 25 bleedin' million quid we paid the sex-crazed Swede from the land of the smorgasbord!?!! And what's he done for his money??! Swede F.A.!! That's what!? Geddit???! Even my old Gran could have picked a better squad than Sven!!? As for the so-called tactics of the Scandinavian Supershagger – 5-4-1??! Don't make me laugh!!? 9-9-9 would be more like it, Sven, so we could get you banged up in a cell for your criminal incompetence, you sex-mad bespectacled bastard from the land of Bjorn Borg!!?!

■ **HEY MISTER!?! Lay off the spud-faced nipper, puh-lease!!? He's only a little scally in short trousers who can't read and write and doesn't know right from wrong!?!! The last thing he needs is for the great British public to crucify him at his moment of agony!!?! So let's all keep Roo-ting for little Wayney (Geddit?!) – his day will come again!!?!**

■ WAYNE bloody Rooney!?! Aren't-chasickofhim?!! The spud-faced loser who can't even control his temper, let alone the ball!?! You may have broken your metatarsal – shame you didn't break your legs – and your arms – and your neck!!?! Geddit?!! Metatarsal??! Mega-Arsehole more like it!?!

■ **SHED A TEAR if you will for the ex-England skipper!!?! He gave his all in his country's hour of need!!? Don't blame David – it's not his fault he was picked by the sex-crazed smorgasbord-guzzler from the land of Abba?! As he goes a-creepin' and a-weepin' into the sunset, I say "God bless you, Dave, and your beautiful wife and lovely kiddies!?!!"**

■ BEND IT like Beckham?!? *END* it like Beckham, more like – i.e. in tears again!!? Dead ball specialist?!? Dead beat is closer to it!!? Good riddance to the big girl's blouse with his anoxeric wife and stupidly named kids!?! Go back to Madrid and get yourself a new tattoo saying "Loser" on your forehead!?! (Geddit??!)

■ **PENALTY SHOOT-OUT?! They should *all* be shot!?! Except for Hargreaves, who's German anyway!?! All together now – "Deutschland Deutschland Über Alles!" *(Is this right? Ed.)***

■ NO WONDER we lost!?! Look at the ref!?! He was an Argie, for God's sake!!?! Of course he rigged the match in favour of the Portuguese!?! We won the Falklands, didn't we, so he's hardly going to let us win the World Cup!?!! Gotcha Señor!!?! Or we will do if you ever show your face around here again!!?!

■ **CHRISTIANO RONALDO!?! More like 'Judas' Ronaldo!?!! We saw you a-blinkin' and a-winkin' at the crowd when you got the filthy Argie ref to send off the hot-headed spud-faced nipper who was picked by the sex-crazed Swedish love machine *(I'm showing you the yellow card. Ed.)*.**

■ *GOD!?! What a disgrace!?!! Millions of Britons prayed to you as our lads queued up to take their penalties!?! And whose side were you on?!? Thank God you don't exist, so we don't have to believe in you any more!?!* (Right that's it – red card. Ed.)

THAT VITAL BY-ELECTION RESULT

New York, New York (Chief Executive's Office – News International Headquarters, Upper East Side)

Cameron *(Conservatives)* Maybe
Brown *(Labour)* Possibly not
Campbell *(Liberal Democrats)* Never

(Swing to Conservatives of one Murdoch)

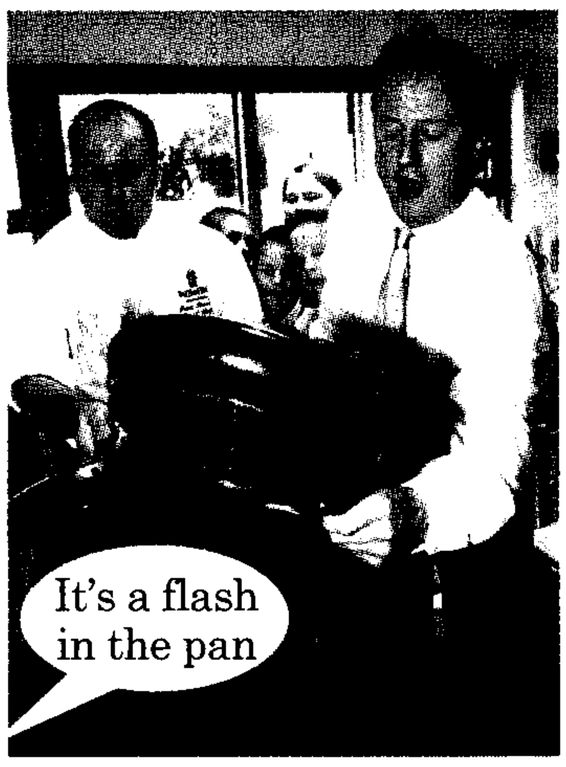
MACCA'S NEW BRIDE SHOCK

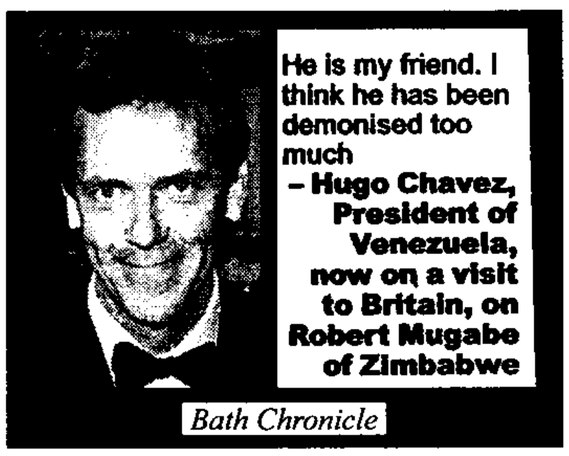
Film Preview

Saving Private Ryanstein

Stirring war drama as the Israeli army, led by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert (Tom Hanks), enter Gaza and flatten it in search of their captured soldier.

CAMERON POLL LATEST




He is my friend. I think he has been demonised too much
– Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela, now on a visit to Britain, on Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe
Bath Chronicle

News in brief

TRIUMPHANT NIGHT FOR VICTORIOUS CAMERON!

LAST NIGHT was a triumphant night for David Cameron, as the results filtered in from an opinion poll that suggested Cameron was marginally more popular than Tony Blair, the least popular politician in the country. *(Reuters)*

'HENMAN RIGHTS' RULING SHOCK

THE HIGH Court has ruled today that a tennis player had his 'Henman's Rights' violated as he was knocked out in straight sets in the second round by Roger Federer.

"The 'Henman's Rights Act'," explained one lawyer, "was written into the Wimbledon charter many years ago. It specifies quite clearly that Tim Henman must be given safe passage into at least the quarter finals so that everyone can kid themselves for another year that one day Tim will win Wimbledon."

DEMANDS GROW FOR WIMBLEDON EQUALITY

ANGER WAS mounting last night as male players at Wimbledon demanded equal rights with women players when it came to the pictures which accompany articles about the tournament in The Daily Telegraph.

"The women players, especially leggy teenage Russians wearing short skirts, get an average 99 percent more pictures than us", says defending champion Roger Federer, "It's high time this disgraceful inequality came to an end."

TEACHER 'TEACHES PUPIL' SHOCK

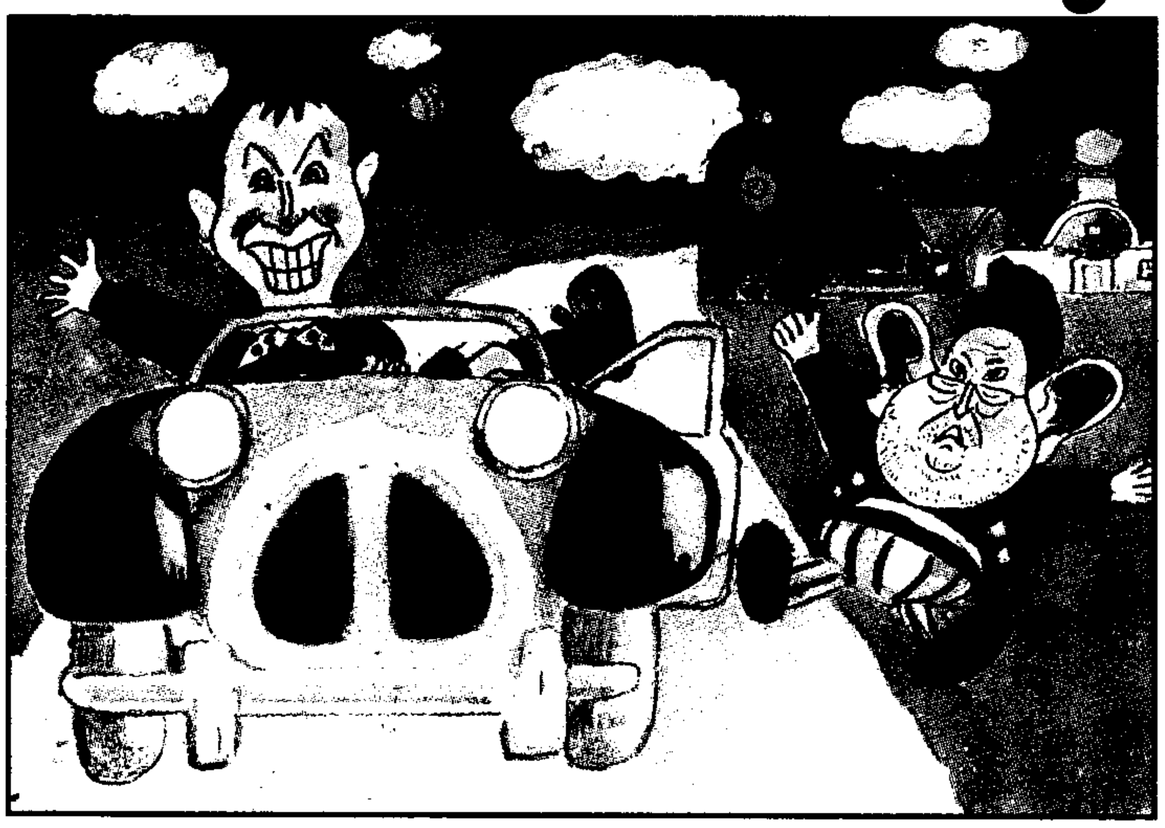
THE EDUCATION Department has reacted angrily today after it was revealed that a teacher at a school in Britain had actually been teaching her pupils.

"Surely she should have been having sex with them or getting them to set their own exams, or getting knifed by them."

"People like this have no place in the teaching profession", said a Department *(cont. p. 94)*

New-look Enid Blyton

Noddy & The Gnome Secretary



BIG EARS was angry. "Noddy has lost his sense of purpose and direction," he told everyone in Toytown. "He shouldn't be allowed to drive the car any more."

Poor Noddy was sad at this. "I thought you were my friend, Big Ears. After all, I gave you a lift in my car."

"Yes, but then you threw me out of the car," said Big Ears, getting really red in the face, which made his big ears look even bigger.

"That's because you let all the goblins roam around Toytown, stealing people's sixpences," said Noddy crossly, "you bitter and useless *(Continued p. 94)*

CLARKE ATTACKS LEADER FOR BEING USELESS

by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

THE FORMER Home Secretary today laid into the leader of his party, saying he had "completely lost the plot".

Denying that his comments were prompted solely by "sour grapes", Mr Kenneth Clarke told reporters, "This bloke Cameron is *(cont. p. 94)*

"Selling a kidney was bad enough..."

OLD JOKES REVISITED

As told by Tara Palmer-Tomkinson's dog.

Dog: I say, I say, I say! My owner's got no nose.

Man: How does she smell?

Dog: Heavily of cocaine.

FRIEND OF THE ROYALS IN NOSE SHOCK

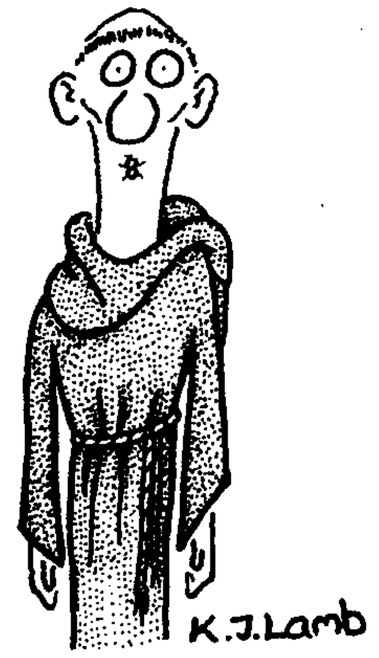
UK 'TOO SOFT ON CANNABIS' SAYS UN

by Our Drugs Staff **Mary Juana**

THE United Nations attacked British drug enforcers yesterday for downgrading Cannabis to Category C. "This is a dangerous and potentially lethal drug," they said.

But the Home Office responded to the criticism by saying, "Hey, chill out, relax, you should try some of this stuff, it's really good... feeling mellow." *(Reuters)*

Friar Nip And Tuck



POETRY CORNER

Lines written on the appointment of Miss Kirsty Young to become the presenter of Desert Island Discs

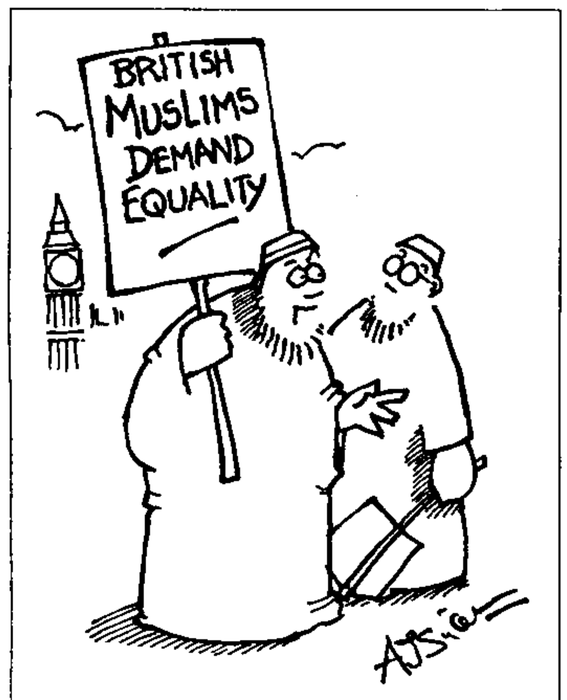
So. Hullo then
Kirsty Young.
You have been chosen
To present
Desert Island
Discs.

"What is your next
Record?"
That will be your
Catchphrase. "And
Your luxury item?"
That will be
Another.

All together now.
Da-da-da-di-dum
Di-da-da
Di-dum-dum
Swoosh, swoosh,
Squawk, squawk.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

A podcast of the above poem, read by Stephen Fry, can be downloaded from www.getsverse.com



"Not for women or gays obviously..."

GERMANS COMPLAIN ABOUT STEREOTYPING

by Our Foreign Affairs Staff **Jonathan Leake and Basil Fawlty-Water-Towers**

THE British public have been asked to respect German sensitivities and have been told "Don't mention the water!" by senior German executives in charge of British utilities.

Dam Busters

Said one Thames Water manager, Oberwaterführer Von Tap, "We are fed up with your constant references to us losing the water. You Britishers are still obsessed by ze water.

"You must let it go – like us. We let it go everywhere!! Ha Ha! Ha!"

He added, "For you, Tommy ze water is over!!

WHALING UPDATE

"They've overturned the ban against hating the Japanese!"

Those World Cup Acronyms In Full

WAGS Wives And Girlfriends

SHAGS Unofficial girlfriends whose numbers appear on footballers' mobile phones

GAGS Writs served by footballers accused of relationships with SHAGS

HAGS Unofficial elderly girlfriends of Wayne Rooney

WAG(E)S Ridiculous sum of footballers' money spent by WAGS, SHAGS, etc.

THE TALIBAN An Apology

IN COMMON with all other newspapers we may have given the impression that we regarded the Taliban as "a spent force", following their defeat at the hands of the United States and British forces in 2001. Headlines such as "They think it's all Omar", "Goodbye to the Taliban!" and "Burqua off, Beardies!" may have led readers to believe that the Taliban were no longer a credible threat to the stability of the region and that only small pockets of resistance remained to be "mopped up". We now realise that the Taliban are the greatest danger to world peace in human history (apart from al Qaeda, obviously) and are capable of putting hundreds of thousands of trained fighters into the field, making our own soldiers extremely vulnerable to attack, humiliation and death. Recent headlines, including "Bring back our boys", "Time to retreat" and "Run for your life, it's the Taliban" will have made our new position clear. We would like to apologise to the Taliban unreservedly for any confusion that our previous articles may have caused.

A NATION REMEMBERS

'Lions led by donkeys'

by W.W.I. Deedes

It was ninety minutes ago today that our heroic lads lost the greatest battle in world history.

Millions of people wept as they struggled to come to terms with the worst defeat in our island's story.

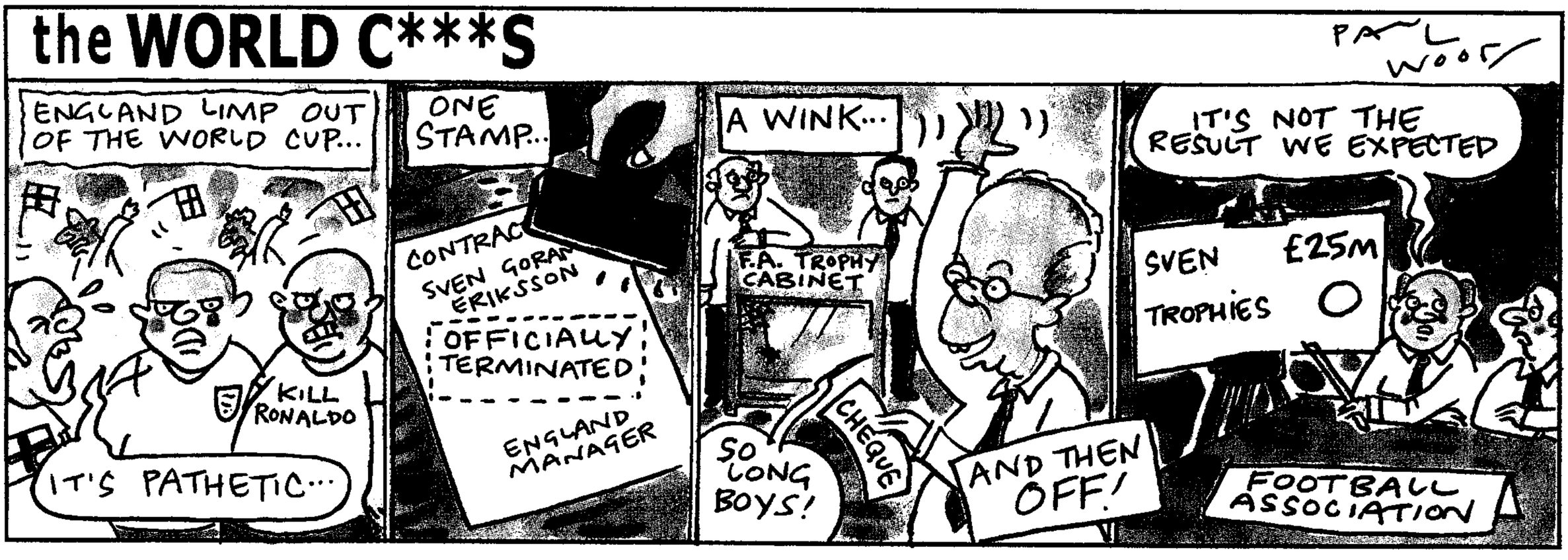
No one could doubt the courage of those at the front line, those heroic figures who obeyed orders and went unhesitatingly onto the field. But for those leaders like General Sven Haig who orchestrated the catastrophe from the safety of his Soho HQ there can be nothing but ignominy.

Somme Like it Not

His tactics were hopeless and wildly out of date and led directly to defeat. As a famous world cup poet Kenneth Wilfredowenstone wrote at the time, "They think it's all over the top – it is now."

● *On other pages*: Small piece about the First World War, p94.

the WORLD C***S



New from Royal Mail

A special commemorative set of stamps to celebrate British achievement in the field of serial killings.

Throughout history Britain has led the world in producing some of the greatest names in multiple homicide and we at Royal Mail are proud to offer this unique collection for a very reasonable sum of £526.

Send now to: Royal Mail, Serial Killer Set Offer, Mount Unpleasant, London WC1.
Please allow 28 years for delivery.

TORY LEADER SPELLS OUT HIS NEW 'BILL OF RIGHTS'

by Our Political Staff **Matthew D'Arshola**

TORY LEADER David Cameron today revealed the contents of his proposed British Bill of Rights.

Those Rights In Full

1. The right not to wear a tie at any time.

2. The right to ride a bicycle through London with one's chauffeur driving at a discreet distance behind with one's top hat.

3. The right of every citizen to have a wind turbine on their roof in order to save the planet from global warming.

4. The right to become prime minister even if one went to Eton.

5. The right to be taken seriously even if you are a complete *(cont. p.94)*

New Words

Woss *(n. vulg)* an act of self-abuse or onanism. Example: "He was caught by the headmaster having a woss" (2006)

Wosser *(n. slang)* abusive term to describe interviewer being paid millions of pounds a year to work for the BBC. Example: "Did you see that bloke on TV on Friday night – what a total wosser!" (2006)

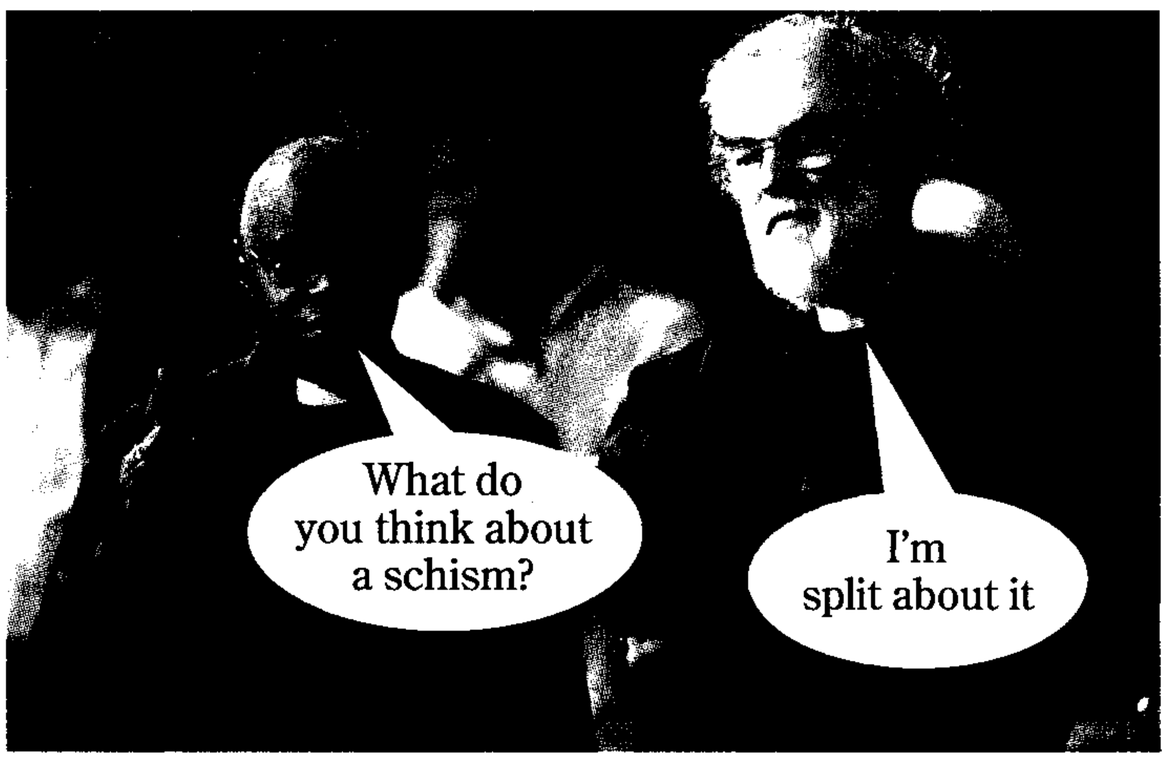
Cameron *(n.)* person stupid enough to go on show presented by wosser *(see above)* to answer questions about having a woss *(That's enough new words. Ed.)*

MODERN NURSERY RHYMES

Dr Foster went to
Gloucester,
Young and idealistic.
He left with stress
From NHS
Targets and statistics.

"What do you think you're lookin' at?"

THOUGHT FOR THE GAY



The Holland family has been bringing their dodgem cars to Rowell Fair for 98 years and these never fail to disappoint visitors.

Evening Telegraph

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

1500 hrs Station opens (new office hours)

1501 hrs 999 call received from member of public to report incident of alleged multiple homicide in the Bobby Moore retail complex by Kurdish people-trafficking gang. Unfortunately no officers were available to respond to this call as the entire station staff was engaged in a 90-minute "monitoring exercise" with regard to the Belarus v. Rumbabwe Group D play-off. Officers had been instructed to examine all crowd shots to identify known English football hooligans who might be attending the wrong game.

1700 hrs Armed response unit despatched to Flat B, 135 Crack Crescent, to effect immediate arrest of dangerous council tax evader Mrs Ethel Prunehat, 84. The criminal had refused to pay council tax lawfully due to Neasden Borough Council, on the grounds that, as she alleged, the local police service had failed to take action to prevent her garden shed being turned into the headquarters of the local crack-dealing organisation, and also a 24-hour brothel. This constituted a prima facie libel against the police service, and officers attempted to persuade Mrs Prunehat to withdraw her disgraceful slur before she unfortunately stood in the way of PC Morden's H&K 45mm sub-machine gun when it was accidentally discharged owing to the heavy-duty anti-terrorist rubber gloves which had been issued to PC Morden for health and safety purposes. Mrs Prunehat will not be available to stand trial owing to her decease.

1800 hrs A case conference was held, involving all the officers who had been engaged in examining photographic evidence relating to the recent incident in which several hundred members of the Islamic community had exercised their human right to mount an arson attack on the local Ikea store in the mistaken belief that this Swedish-owned business was in some way connected to inflammatory Danish cartoons showing the Prophet Mohammed assembling a flat-pack shelf unit. After more than 100 hours of intense scrutiny of a close-up photograph showing a Mr Siddiqui al-Bastardi carrying in one hand a placard bearing the words 'Burn All Infidels Now And Cut Off Their Heads' and in the other a box of matches, it was concluded that this did not constitute sufficient evidence to identify Mr Siddiqui. As one officer remarked, "They all look the same." He immediately arrested himself for making a deliberately racist comment likely to cause a breach of the peace, and was suspended on full pay pending an official inquiry.

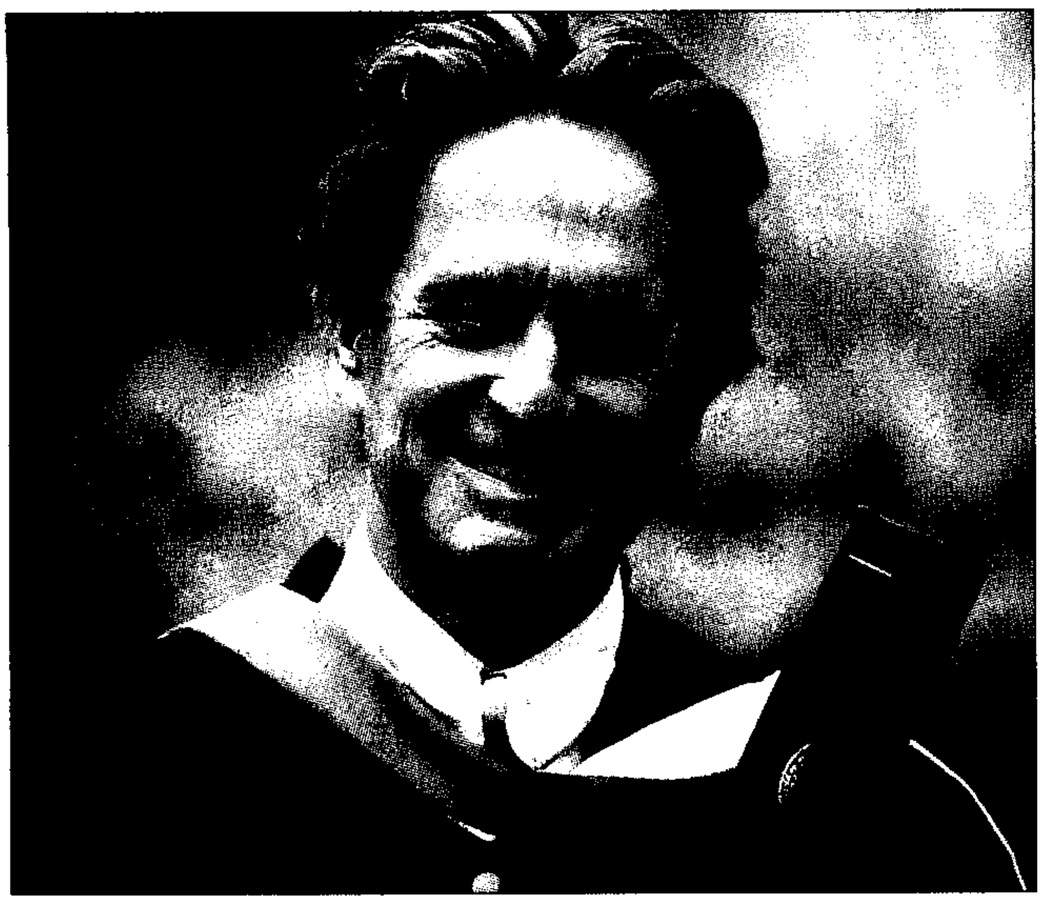
1900 hrs Report received from MI5 that a middle-aged Caucasian male had been observed in the Whitehall area, carrying a copy of an inflammatory and seditious publication, the Daily Telegraph, with its headline 'Is It Time For Blair To Go?'. This had been rightly identified as a serious breach of the Counter-Terrorism (Palace of Westminster) Act, prohibiting the expression of any political view critical of the Prime Minister within two kilometres of the House of Commons. All forces within the Met area had been summoned to provide back-up, as central London was cordoned off as part of what was code-named 'Operation Menezes 2'. The suspect was eventually detained and held for 48 hours pending his rendition to Tonbridge Wells, via the Algerian prison system.

2000 hrs Taking advantage of the temporary redeployment of the entire Neasden force to central London, it was decided to resume our monitoring exercise on the World Cup Group Z (Mongolia v. Luxembourg) while partaking of a Chinese dinner in Gerrard Street's fashionable Wei Roo Nee restaurant ('Cantonese tapas at its best'). The following items were consumed: 14, 21, 23, double portion of 32, 45, 78, and 120 bottles of 86.

2400 hrs When the proprietor of the Wei Roo Nee, Mr La La Po, presented his bill he was arrested for exhibiting a white and red flag bearing the legend 'Come On England!', and charged under the Protection of Sensitive Celtic Minorities Act 2006 with displaying an inflammatory racist object.

Boris Johnson, columnist and Conservative MP, 42.

Scotland on Sunday



That Degree Citation In Full

SALUTAMUS MICHAELUM DOUGLASI, FAMOSUM STELLUM HOLLYWOODENSIS ET FILIUS KIRKI DOUGLASI, FAMOSISSIMUM STELLUM HOLLYWOODENSIS IN CINEMATICO CLASSICO NOMINE 'SPARTACUS' ('EGO SUM SPARTACUS. *NON.* EGO SUM SPARTACUS' ETC. ETC.) ATQUE MARITUS AD ZETAM CATHERINAM JONUS, PULCHERRIMAM PUELLAM GALLICORUM FAMOSISSIMAM PER... ER... ER... HONORARUM TE, MICHAELE, PER ACTUM THESPIANORUM MAGNIFICO IN PARTICULARE 'ATTRACTIONE FATALI' ET 'INSTINCTO FUNDAMENTALI' CUM SHARONA LAPIDA (ADULTUS SOLUS XXXX). 'EHU QUOD SCORCHERUS' DICIT TELEGRAPHICUS DIURNALIS *(SATIS EDITORIUM).*

© UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS MMVI

Then and now

Nursery Times

July 7, 2006

PRINCE CHARMING 'WORTH EVERY PENNY'

by Our Royal Staff **Mother O'Goose**

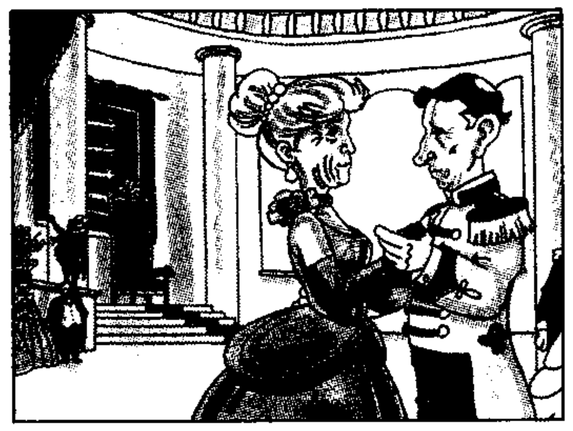
FAIRYLAND was thrown into a state of uproar yesterday following the publication of Prince Charming's household accounts.

Last year, it was revealed, the Prince cost each man, woman, fairy, gnome and goblin in the kingdom half a silver sixpence.

The money goes to support the Prince's lavish lifestyle, involving the throwing of a continual round of balls, requiring the services of hundreds of footmen, butlers, mice and pumpkins.

At the Prince's country residence, Highgrove Castle, a chef is permanently employed in making the Prince's favourite blackbird pie.

A palace spokesman said,



"The Prince represents very good value – particularly since he married the Ugly Sister, who requires very little upkeep compared with the late Cinderella, Princess of Hearts."

Furthermore, the Prince's latest venture, selling organic Duchy Gingerbread Men, has generated a large amount of revenue, namely 1p.

● Full story and details of accounts **94**

THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE

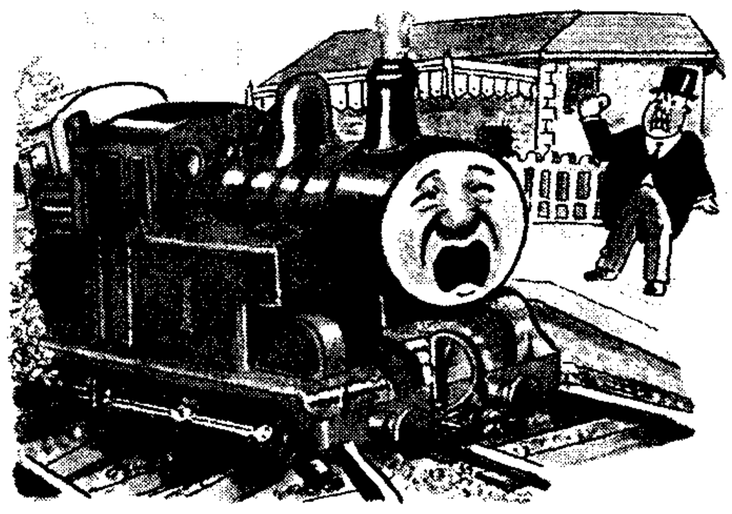
BY THE REV. TAWDRY

"OH NO!" said Thomas. "The trains are terribly overcrowded."

"There's only one solution," said the Fat Controller.

"Put on more trains?" asked Thomas.

"No," said the Fat Controller. "Get rid of the passengers by putting the fares up!"



Thomas looked puzzled.

"Don't you see?" said the Fat Controller. "Soon we'll make the trains so expensive that they will be empty. And then we can scrap them, which will make it a much cheaper service to run."

"Hoorah!" said no one. "No cheers for the Fat Controller."

The End

DIARY

Day 18,250. The housemates are celebrating their half-century in the Big Brother house.

11.15 am. Mikey and Richard have wrapped up well and are in the garden. Glyn is having a bit of a cough. His back's been playing up again. Imogen and Lea are making their way on their zimmer frames to the living area. Satnav and Cornflake, who only joined the house thirty-two years ago, are in the kitchen, getting their bearings. Nikki is in the diary room. She's left her teeth somewhere but she can't remember where.

NIKKI: I'm bored shitless she really does my head in she's gonna push me so far one of these days she so really fucks me off so much I fuckin swear it does my head in.

BB: Today, Nikki, you have been in the Big Brother house for fifty years. You are now seventy three years of age. Nikki – how do you feel?

NIKKI: I'm bored shitless she really does my head in she's gonna push me so far one of these days she so really fucks me off so much I fuckin swear it does my head in.

BB: Thank you, Nikki. You may now leave the diary room.

NIKKI: Big Brother? One more thing.

BB: Yes, Nikki?

NIKKI: I'm bored shitless she really does my head in she's gonna push me so far one of these days she so really fucks me off so much I fuckin swear it does my head in.

BB: Thank you, Nikki.

11.23 am: Nikki and Richard are in the kitchen.

NIKKI: Have you just eaten them? They was my false teeth, they were and now you've gone and fuckin eaten them. You're a fuckin moron. Just go away. I so can't believe you just done that.

11.25 am: Glyn and Camshaft are in the garden. Glyn has had a thought.

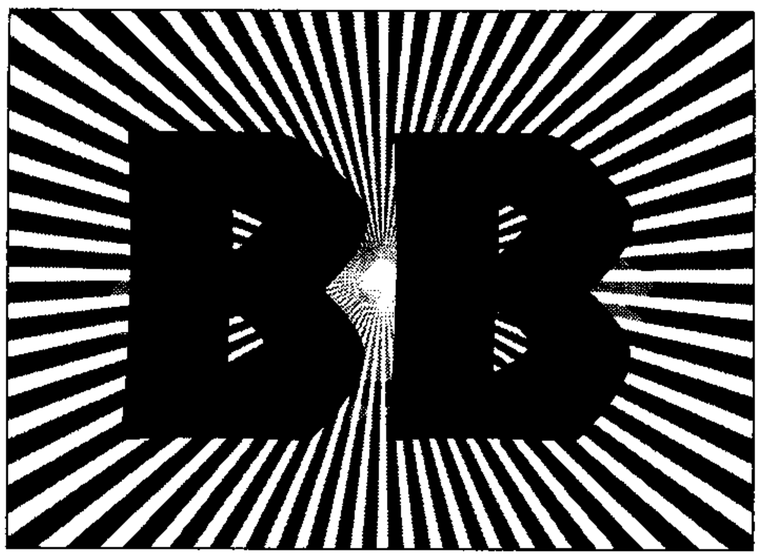
GLYN: You know they say every cloud's got silver lino, right? Well, I've like looked and it's so not true.

CAMSHAFT: Lining, babes.

GLYN: Eh?

CAMSHAFT: Not silver lino, babes. Silver lining.

GLYN: Oh. Right. I'll take another look, then.



BIG BROTHER 2056

11.27 am: Aisleyne and Imogen are in the kitchen.

AISLEYNE: How long we been in here then?

IMOGEN: Where?

AISLEYNE: Here?

IMOGEN: Here?

AISLEYNE: Yeah. Here.

IMOGEN: Fifty years, babes.

AISLEYNE: Fifty fuckin' years?

IMOGEN: Yeah.

AISLEYNE: Oh. Right. I gotta do something about these hair extensions.

11.31am: Richard and Laptop are in the garden. Richard is watching paint dry.

RICHARD: This paint's really getting on my fuckin' *TITS* it is. It so takes that long to dry, it's a fuckin' jerk. And the fuckin' wall as well, it's just as fuckin' bad. D'you know what I mean?

LAPTOP: You gotta be strong, Richard. You gotta be strong for all of us. You're gonna get through this, mate, I know you are. Come on, babes. Give us a hug. That's better.

RICHARD *(sobs)*: It's just that the fuckin' paint's been drying BEHIND my back, that's what I can't fuckin' BEAR! It's just so fuckin' TWO-FACED!

LAPTOP: Here's some fuckin' tissue, babes. Take a big fuckin' blow.

11.33 am: Lea comes into the garden.

LEA: What's the matter with him?

LAPTOP: It's so the paint. It's ultra fuckin" paranoid. It won't fuckin' dry, just because we're lookin' at it. It's just lyin' there drippin', givin' out negative vibes.

LEA: I so like hate that fuckin' paint. It's always slaggin' people off and it just looks through you and make you feel like rubbish, know what I mean.

LAPTOP: C'mon, babes. You gotta be strong. Let's go and watch some grass grow.

LEA: I hate the fuckin' grass, the way it grows so slow, like it thinks it's so fuckin' SUPERIOR. That grass is so fuckin' paranoid, I can't bear it.

11.36am: Nikki and Satnav are in the kitchen

NIKKI: Remember wosisface?

SATNAV: Who?

NIKKI: You know. Wosisfuckinface. Thassit. Frank. What fuckin' happened to Frank, then? He fuckin' voted out, was he?

SATNAV: No fuckin' way. He only fuckin' went and fuckin' DIED, didn't he?

NIKKI: When was that, then?

SATNAV: Eight, nine years ago. Maybe ten. Old fuckin' age.

NIKKI: Oh. Right. Yeah. See if I care. Used to so get on my fuckin' tits, he did. I really liked him and I got a lot of respect for him, but he got on my fuckin' tits he did. So what did we do with the fuckin' corpse, then?

SATNAV: Big Brother made us bury it in the garden. It was startin' to piss me right off anyway, rotting and smelling and that. Least Big Brother gave us a luxury fuckin' hamper in return.

NIKKI: I hate corpses. They're so two-fuckin'-faced.

11. 41 am: Lea is in the diary room. Lea's bosoms are in the garden.

BB: Lea, you have been nominated for eviction by your fellow housemates 3726 times over the past half-century but you are still here. How are you feeling?

LEA: I've been bored fuckin' shitless these past 50 fuckin' years.

BB: Lea, during your time in the Big Brother house, you've performed your own breast enlargement 17 times. They are now a housemate in their own right, and come into the diary room by themselves. Unfortunately, Lea, they can't stop slagging you off behind your back. Why do you think that is?

LEA: I'm just too fuckin' real for them.

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM. USUALLY HE DOES STUFF WHEN I'M AROUND..
SEEMS A BIT LETHARGIC..
HE SHOULD BE BARKING, PANTING, JUMPING ABOUT... ACTING PLEASED TO SEE ME...
LOOK AT HIS TAIL. NOT EVEN A TWITCH..
HE MIGHT AT LEAST SHOW US A COUPLE OF WAGS...
COME ON BOY...
THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!
GOOD DOG!
DARLING! LOOK WHO'S DROPPED IN! VICTORIA AND COLEEN!
HIYA!
POINT

Literary Review

Coup what a stinker

The Wonga Coup
Adam Roberts
(Profile Books, £9.99)

CHAPS called Nosher and Smelly, a bloodthirsty black dictator with a penchant for human testicles and crafty Arabs lurking in the shadows – if *The Wonga Coup* were a novel, it would make Wilbur Smith seem intellectual and politically correct. Slap in a bibliography, list a load of interviewees, pretend it's all true and suddenly you have a brilliant piece of investigative journalism. Or not.

In March 2004 a planeload of men were arrested at Harare airport, Zimbabwe, at dead of night. The next day, 18 white people were picked up in oil-rich, obscure Equatorial Guinea. It was, according to the country's president, a brilliant piece of pan-African co-operation to intercept a deadly conspiracy hatched by white mercenaries and their wealthy backers to steal his country.

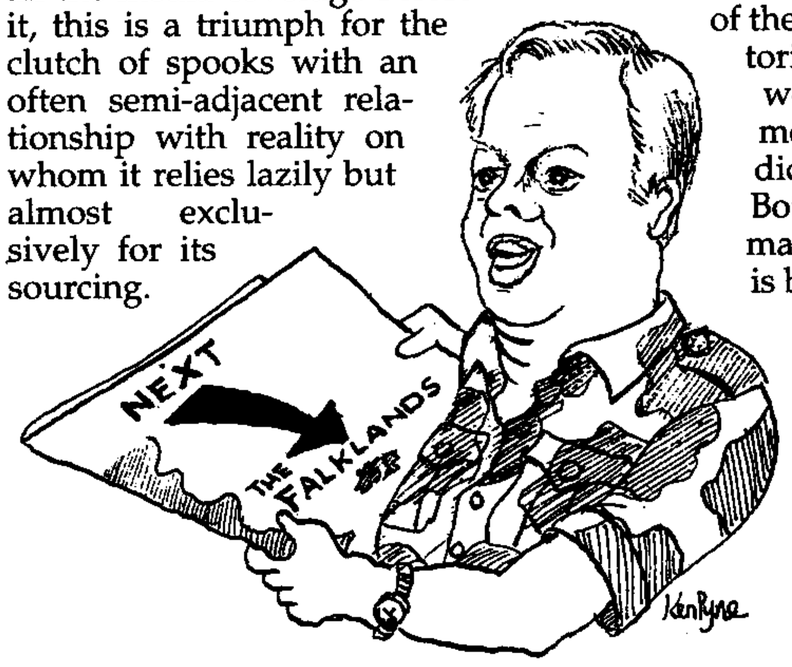
Unlike all the other nondescript claims of foiled conspiracies from far away, this was different. The military mastermind of the alleged plot was British, and a posh one at that. Simon Mann was an old Etonian. The son of the man reported to be his main backer had been in *Holby City*. A quick search on the internet showed their target made Pol Pot appear genteel. As the leaks from investigators and arse-coverers began to flow, all who wrote about the affair dusted off the analogy that it seemed like "something straight out of a Frederick Forsyth novel".

Newspapers mentioned Jeffrey Archer and Peter Mandelson, who denied any knowledge or involvement. Then Mark Thatcher was arrested in Cape Town. The story of this apparently bungled fiasco, led by a group of greedy ex-public schoolboys against an exotic African backdrop, was irresistible.

But was it true and what was it really about?

Insiders point to a web of intrigue and betrayal, in which vague plans to promote the cause of an exiled opposition leader were quickly seized upon by intelligence services in Equatorial Guinea and South Africa to set up Mann and his chums for a conspiracy that was designed to fail. In the process, Equatorial Guinea would have a pretext for one of its regular clamp-downs against real and imagined opponents. South Africa could claim a victory over the private military companies run by apartheid era ex-servicemen marauding across the continent. And the freelance informers, working both for the two countries and with the plotters, could get rich.

This is a complex and interesting story. Unfortunately it is not the account revealed in Mr Roberts' lightweight volume. Like virtually all the media coverage before it, this is a triumph for the clutch of spooks with an often semi-adjacent relationship with reality on whom it relies lazily but almost exclusively for its sourcing.



Nigel Morgan, informer to South African intelligence and friend to Mann and Thatcher, was "generous to a fault" and provided "a thick file of documents". His business partner Johann Smith, an informer to – and later decorated by – Equatorial Guinea, also provided "thick folders of his intelligence reports". Henry Page, lawyer for Equatorial Guinea, also had "yet more documents and material relevant to the case." Why were they so generous? Did it suit them, or those behind them, to have the conspiracy presented as dim-witted toffs caught up in a one-dimensional joke?

At one point, apparently, the mercenaries were scheming to lure Equatorial Guinea's president, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, to the country's main airport personally to collect six Land Cruisers, at which point he would be detained or shot. "The plan," according to Roberts, "had much to recommend it."

We are expected to believe that an African leader in power for 25 years (who had shot his way to the throne with the backing of foreign troops and remains guarded by Moroccan mercenaries), at the head of a $6bn economy and with a family fond of depositing 30kgs of $100 bills at a Washington bank, would personally rush to the airport on the promise of six *Toyotas*?

Is it the kind of plan a former SAS officer with years working in Africa would have entertained for a moment? Or is it a fantasy cooked up to see how gullible an earnest scribe could be?

Relying on a series of confessions extracted from two of Africa's most notorious prisons, where allegations of torture are manifest, does not instil confidence in the reader. One of those detained in Equatorial Guinea has already died in custody, while many of those in Zimbabwe reported abuses. Simon Mann, and Nick Du Toit, the alleged head of the forward party in Equatorial Guinea, say they were forced to write statements according to scripts dictated by their captors. Both have retracted all the material on which the book is based.

Roberts cheerfully tells tales of the appalling treatment the alleged conspirators received, but – at the risk of otherwise finding he has no account to tell – ploughs on with the contents all the same.

But in any case the story is full of holes: the author did not go to Malabo and has spoken to no one in Equatorial Guinea. It is clear Smith and Morgan at the very least knew of a plot months before the March arrests, and had briefed their clients. Earlier still, Nick Du Toit had gone into business with Armengol Ondo, President Obiang's brother and national security chief, whose job it has been since 1979 to uncover coup plots. Did Armengol not know of Du Toit's background as an arms dealer and "private security" consultant? Did Du Toit and Mann think they could pull a fast one on such an official? Why did Obiang initially claim the mercenaries had been arrested in Namibia? Are any of the conspirators to be trusted? Is Africa easily dismissed as no more than an idle canvas against which an abundantly implausible and distinctly suspect yarn can be spun?

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS, Pt 94

Wild Mary: A Life of Mary Wesley
Patrick Marnham
(Chatto & Windus, £18.99)

...It was at this point, with the storm-clouds gathering over Europe, that Mary took the opportunity to sever her brief alliance with the Hon. Esmond Crackwytte, Lord Clantantrum's eccentric heir, and fall wholeheartedly into the arms of Reggie Kent-Cumberland, first met on an excursion to the Bavarian alps as long ago as 1932.

"War", she later wrote, with her customarily penetrating shrewdness, "was a splendid excuse for people to behave even more appallingly than they would otherwise have done." Although the affair with Reggie was of brief duration (27 May to 1 June 1940) she remained grateful to him. "Reggie was most awfully sweet. He used to lend me his copy of the *Times* and would always stand one a lunch at the Ritz and that kind of thing." Indeed, there is an echo of the relationship in her second novel, *Frightfully Posh*, in which Salmonetta Frink-Parsnip, bathing naked off the rocks of Pollwiddlem with Hector Fitzboodle, is shocked by the size of his genitalia. "Of course, Reggie was hung like an orang-utan," a friend recalled, "only one didn't talk about such things in those days." Now, with her children lashed to push-chairs in the care of an obliging factotum, Nanny Fang, and her husband off somewhere or other, Mary was able to join the "top secret hush-hush Whitehall show" run by her Old Etonian friend Walter "Carrots" Cholmondeley, and accumulate the valuable experience that was to see her, many years later, emerge as one of the most tedious upper-class drips in modern English letters [*shouldn't that be "distinguished lady novelists"*? Ed.]

List of illustrations

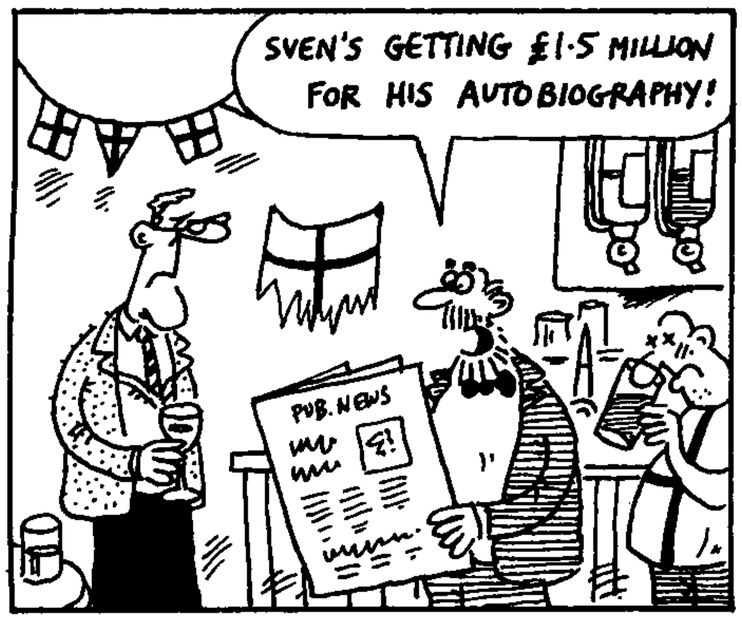
Mary's great-great-grandmother, Henrietta ffrench-Saunders, painted in Rome by Garibaldi, RA

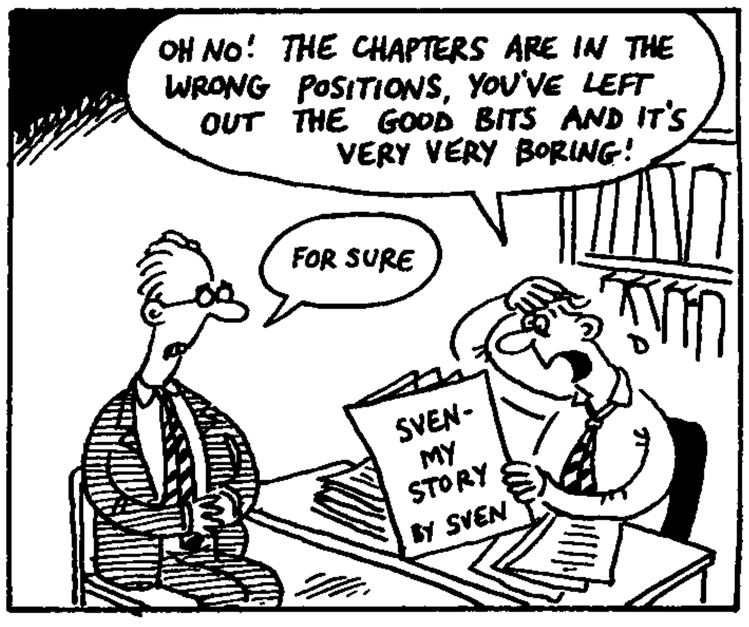
October 1933 En route to India with Bobo, Oofy and Gervais

July 1941 Christening of the Hon. Toby Snargs, St Philomena's, Pendennis-on-the- Tamar

From the index

Wesley, Mary: ...marries Esme Snargs, 112, marriage sours, 113, wartime affairs, 114-88, divorce petition listed, 189, in WVS providing comforts for troops, 190-1, care lavished on children, 191 (footnote iii), divorce hearing, 192, on erotic nature of war, 193-208, on "frightfully good time" with Hon Clarence Maltravers, 209... [*continues endlessly*]




OH NO! THE CHAPTERS ARE IN THE WRONG POSITIONS, YOU'VE LEFT OUT THE GOOD BITS AND IT'S VERY VERY BORING!
FOR SURE
SVEN- MY STORY BY SVEN

KING + QUEEN
PUBLIC HOUSE
COOK REQUIRED
Imaginative Person With Flair, Adaptable + Flexible
No Pre-Madonnas
Friday Ad, Tonbridge

Books & Bookmen

■ LAUDABLE though Max Hastings' *Spectator* broadside against the inherent cosiness of book reviewing was, he seems a little behind the latest trends in bookselling.

"The *Sunday Times* did the book world a big favour recently by exposing the monstrous practice of bookshops... which will only feature titles in their catalogues and windows in exchange for hard cash from publishers," he harrumphed.

Hurrah for the *Sunday Times* indeed – although this "monstrous practice" was actually brought to the book world's attention by the late Giles Gordon back in January 2002, in a *Bookseller* article headlined "Proper publishing goes bung".

Presumably, we can expect further scoops from Hitler about how some show business autobiographies are ghost-written... and supermarkets sell books cheaper than bookshops.

■ AS BEFITS a former minister of culture, David Mellor finds a literary echo in the downfall of football referee Graham Poll.

He tells *Evening Standard* readers that it "reminds me of what was said by one wag about the tragic end of Little Nell in the celebrated poem: you'd need a heart of stone not to laugh". Quite a scoop, since until now everyone else foolishly thought that the "celebrated poem" – *The Old Curiosity Shop* by Charles Dickens – was actually a novel.

A day later Mellor surfaced in the *Sun*, spluttering at the news the Sven Goran Eriksson will earn big money from a tell-all autobiography. "It's a disgrace," Mellor rages. "He's a mercenary."

Unlike a certain ex-minister of culture, who in 1997 signed a £200,000 deal with Michael Joseph for his tell-all memoirs, *Old Wine and Broken Bottles*. True, Mellor eventually abandoned the project and repaid the advance – but not because of any moral qualms about mercenary VIPs flogging memoirs. "David is just awfully busy with his newspaper column for the *People* and his radio and television work," his literary agent explained. "It is a pity because it was to have been 'David Mellor Live and Unleashed'."

First Drafts

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom it was the age of foolishness, some people said tomato some people said
Pearsall

Charles Dickens

■ THE trade press reports of *Big Brother* non-celeb Chantelle Houghton's recent meet and greet with the buyers from the major high street booksellers made curious, but telling reading.

In a quiet moment, Houghton explained to *Publishing News* "that when she arrived at the Nibbies she heard a rumour that she was to write a book", the subtext appearing to be that this was the first she knew of any such development. She wasn't kept waiting long: "The next day I got an offer." Bless.

Would that struggling authors boringly traditional enough to actually write their own books and have a story worth telling could have the same luck. Welcome to the brave new world of publishing!

■ AMAZON's automated recommendations service continues its attempts to broaden its customers' horizons, with one *Eye* reader who had previously used the online bookshop to buy gifts for his five-year-old receiving the following baffling email:

"Greetings from Amazon.co.uk: We've noticed that customers who have purchased *Flanimals* by Ricky Gervais have also ordered *The Suicide Factory: Abu Hamza and the Finsbury Park Mosque*, by Sean O'Neill. For this reason, you might like to know that this book will be released on June 19."

Log rolling

■ EVEN seasoned observers of AC Grayling's bizarre media career were a little stunned by the philosopher's ecstatic *Times* review of Howard Jacobson's *Kalooki Nights*.

Best known for his columns on everyday dilemmas, Grayling evidently sees no need for ethical hand-wringing when it comes to book reviewing. Jacobson's latest, he frothed, was "a work of genius... to repeat, and repeat plainly, a work of genius".

Oddly unmentioned – professorial absent-mindedness, no doubt – was that the author is a pal of the reviewer.

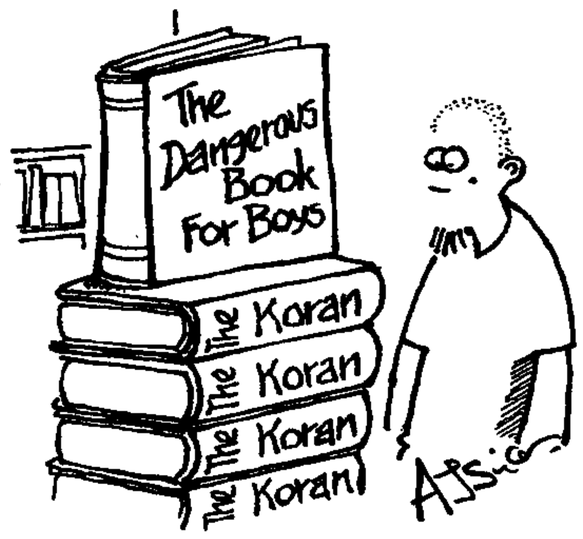
■ SCOTTISH writers love to praise one another, and London-based publishers and literary editors – hazy about the interconnections – usually let the literary "McMafia" get away with it.

So Ian Rankin acclaims Andrew O'Hagan. Kate Atkinson, qualified by residence, hails Michel Faber, ditto, as "wonderful", and says she "loves Ali Smith's prose". Ali is equally enthusiastic about Kate, compares Alan Warner to Faulkner, and calls James Robertson "brilliant".

James Meek's first novel boasts jacket puffs from Faber and Warner; Rankin and Val McDermid similarly extol Denise Mina; but Louise Welsh's debut's jacket tops them both with a full house of quotes from Atkinson, McDermid, Mina and Christopher Brookmyre.

Rivalling Smith as most energetic log-roller, perhaps surprisingly, is Irvine Welsh: an indulgent *Guardian* has allowed the former wild man to transform himself into a latterday praise-singer, producing uncritical paeans to compatriots such as Meek, Alasdair Gray, James Kelman and James Buchan – his rapturous synopsis of Robertson's forbidding-sounding latest was a typical effort, calling its author a "great writer" and supplying exactly the kind of quote ("overwhelmingly compassionate and thought-provoking") publishers crave for the paperback. It seems the Trainspotting hell-raiser has become the Fay Weldon de nos jours, churning out puffs for fellow-Scots as prolifically as she once enthused about other women novelists.

'Bookworm'



I start a book with the mania of desire and end it humbled by unrequited love.

Novelist LOUISE DEAN
Time Out

Rooney's porcine squint bristling with bound devastation like febrile livestock, a rosette-spattered minotaur so brimming with force that when denied action he's a danger to his team-mates and himself. It's easy to imagine this destructive Kali-like energy leading young Wayne into the crimson-lipped arms of a snaggle-toothed matriarch just to grunt and vent his darkly beautiful potency.

RUSSELL BRAND
Guardian

Pseuds Corner

The thing about the World Cup is that you know – know for absolutely certain – that by the time it is over you will have been part of one of the events that creates the consciousness of the nation...When you travel to a World Cup it is as if you are to meet Captain Oates on his last walk, or to see the small boats milling into the beaches of Dunkirk.

SIMON BARNES
The Times

By placing an arm wrestling competition within the context of an open submission art exhibition he aims to juxtapose the heroics of professional sport with the aesthetics of minimalism.

Press release on the opening of Norwich's Strongest Man & Woman competition by the Australian artist David Brazier

My family suggested that I should enter the diplomatic service and paint in my spare time. Can you imagine?

HOWARD HODGKIN
Weekend Telegraph

The Saar is where winemaking meets surgery. The quest for ripeness is so remorseless that the wines' balance can evoke a scalpel blade, their flesh is often pared to the bone, and tasting them is an experience of shocking clarity, like looking at exposed organs under theatre lights.

ANDREW JEFFORD on the Ockfener Bockstein Riesling 2005 Dr Wagner, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, *Waitrose Food Illustrated*

...the Vagina Warriors claim to be up to a certain job, claim to be iconoclasts, then go home at 4.30. They're the plumbers of the warrior world. Bring on the Cunt Warriors.

ZOE WILLIAMS on reclaiming the C-word, *Guardian*

CONTRIBUTORS: Anon, Edwin Freeman, Russell Lynch, Chris Coombes, John Roberts, Karin Farnworth, Neil Johnson

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

THE ELDERLY

Don't-care homes?

CARING for old people is big business; and with an increasingly aging population it is set to boom. No wonder venture capitalists are among those said to be offering around £1.2bn for Four Seasons, one of the biggest providers of care homes for the elderly.

FOUR SEASONS HEALTH CARE

How much of that might be spent on improving the lot of those in the care of Four Seasons remains unknown. Which is a pity. For a devastating inquiry report into the appalling death of one of its Scottish residents reveals a catalogue of neglect triggered by chronic understaffing, lack of training and poor management.

George Fairlie, 75, was left for up to 18 hours a day on a mattress on the floor of the Alexandra Nursing Home. He was covered in hideous bedsores, one so infected it had become gangrenous, and in the days before staff eventually summoned medical help, he had barely been fed or given water. He arrived in hospital severely malnourished and dehydrated, with blood pressure that had dropped to critical levels.

Describing some of his treatment as "not just undignified but cruel", David Pender, the sheriff of North Strathclyde who carried out the inquiry, said: "There can be no doubts that poor nursing care led to Mr Fairlie's state of malnutrition and dehydration and to his poor state of health... to attempt to advance a contrary view is, in my opinion, quite untenable." He was dismissing other theories put forward by those representing Four Seasons Health Care, which had objected to the inquiry in the first place.

The sheriff heavily criticised the manager of the home, Ruth Grogan, for dereliction of duty and for failing to respond to the families' many concerns and complaints.

In addition, the inquiry heard, over one weekend nine Filipino care workers who were said to have been poorly treated walked out without notice, another left and made an anonymous complaint to the Care Commission which oversees the running of the home. Often the wing which housed dementia patients who needed high levels of care had only one trained staff member on duty.

Nor is the Alexandra an isolated case. In 2005, three years after Mr Fairlee's death in November 2002, a Care Commission report into another Scottish home owned by Four Seasons, Hall House Lodge, exposed chronic staff shortages and poor practice. An undercover investigation by the *Daily Record* the previous year into another home in Glasgow had exposed bullying, neglect and yet more chronic staff shortages. And an investigation is now underway to find out how an 87-year-old patient went missing from Four Seasons' Bankview Nursing Home last month. His body was found two miles away.

FORENSICS

Blasted Heath

WHAT a coincidence that three men were cleared of murder because of the discredited evidence of pathologist Michael Heath (below) on the very day the Home Office launched a disciplinary inquiry into the doctor's conduct in a series of other cases.

Eye readers may recall that several of Dr Heath's contemporaries were so concerned about his methods and conclusions they took the unusual steps of reporting him. In one criminal appeal case, five of the world's leading pathologists gave their time and expertise for free to overturn a conviction for a murder that never was (it was a drug overdose).

Last month the court of appeal freed Victor Boreman and Michael and Malcolm Byrne who had been convicted of the murder of their London neighbour, Jonathan Reid, after a drunken row in April 1996. Reid was found dead after a fire in his flat which occurred several hours after the fight.

The three men had admitted beating Reid up, but maintained that he was alive when they had left him. Dr Heath alone had claimed for the prosecution that he may have drowned in his own blood from a head wound; but other experts found smoke in the victim's lungs suggesting he was alive at the time of the fire and died of asphyxia.

At the same time as the appeal judges led by Lord Justice Hooper said Dr Heath's claims had been completely undermined, the disciplinary inquiry down the road at the Old Bailey was told that Dr Heath, a Home Office pathologist since 1991, had "fallen short of the high standards required by the Secretary of State of forensic pathologists". He had refused to back down on his view that two women had been murdered despite strong evidence to the contrary.

In both cases the partners of the women were arrested and put on trial. In the first, Steven Puaca was jailed in 2002 for smothering his girlfriend Jacqueline Tindsley after Heath maintained he had pushed her face down on a bed. But two defence pathologists at the time, coupled with the evidence of five more at appeal, said there was no evidence to support that conclusion. Ms Tindsley, who had a long history of drug and alcohol abuse, had – as Puaca who had found her and raised the alarm had claimed – died of a drug overdose, perhaps coupled with a seizure. She had a cocktail of substances in her blood including opiates, tranquillisers, anti-depressants and alcohol. Puaca was freed by the court of appeal last year.

In the second case, Kenneth Fraser was said by Heath to have battered his partner Mary Anne Moore to death in their home. Three other pathologists said she suffered textbook signs of being pushed or falling down stairs.

During the trial of Victor Boreman and Michael and Malcolm Byrne, fellow pathologists had been alarmed when Heath had said that he had applied the Glasgow Coma Scale (a scoring system used to assess the level of consciousness in people who have suffered a head injury), when examining the victim. But Reid was not conscious, he was dead – so the scale was meaningless. That was 10 years ago and Dr Heath has worked on many high profile cases since, including that of Stuart Lubbock, who died in entertainer Michael Barrymore's swimming pool.

The disciplinary hearing is expected to last several weeks.

BRIBERY & CORRUPTION

Golden fleece

NEW Labour might promise to legislate against anything that hits the tabloid headlines faster than you can say "tough on crime" – with umpteen criminal justice bills to show for it – but the time is somehow never right to act on serious crimes perpetrated by the wealthiest corporations.

In an announcement that Downing Street managed to spin as "More Help for African Nations to Fight Corruption", the government has refused calls from the Africa all-party parliamentary committee for anti-corruption legislation this year – despite mounting evidence that British companies have been in it up to their necks for decades and the fact that, on the government's own admission, "the law of bribery is in need of reform".

Lamenting that "bribery is a hard crime to pin down in a way that balances the interests of all stakeholders", the government would only commit to a bill "in due course". That'll show them.

What help there is for African nations in the war on corruption takes the form of an "international corruption task force", to be staffed by the City of London police and the Met. There will also be a "ministerial champion" in the shape of International Development Secretary Hilary Benn (above), who summed up the problem: "In poor countries corruption harms the poorest people above all. Money meant for drugs for a sick child, or to build a hospital, can be siphoned off into overseas bank accounts..."

The latest fine words and lukewarm action come soon after the government's half-hearted anti-corruption restrictions on companies taking taxpayer guarantees for export business (see *Eye* 1156), which themselves had to be forced on then Trade Secretary Patricia Hewitt through legal action by campaigners, and against a background of not a single conviction (ever) for bribery of foreign officials. If the offences were a bit pettier and had roused the red-tops, rather than just quietly fleeced poor countries for years, perhaps something would be done.

POLICE 5

Well Met

A CRUCIAL element of the Metropolitan Police's efforts to bring its creaking information systems up to date is an IT project called C3i, estimated to be worth £250m. One man running the programme has taken advantage of modern methods of doling out work to make a tidy profit for himself.

Amanat Hussain is the deputy director of the C3i programme. He also happens to be the owner of a management consultancy company called Nicoms Ltd, which by a remarkable coincidence given the number of management consultancies around, has won a contract to provide seven consultants to C3i.

Favouritism in handing out the work? The Met insists the firm won its "framework agreement" legitimately, which allows it to be given contracts without further competition. So that's all right, then.

It's impossible to find out how much money Nicoms Ltd makes from this arrangement (it's "commercially confidential"); but if it's like any other consultancy it will charge out its people at £1,000 a day or so while paying them a fraction of that – leaving a handsome cut, possibly hundreds of thousands a year, for proprietor Mr Hussain. At the country's largest law enforcement agency, what could be wrong with that?

AIRCRAFT FUMES

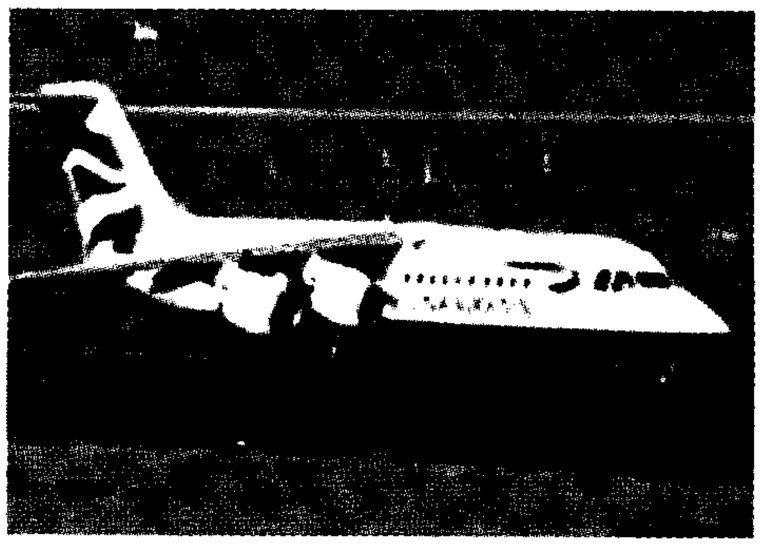
Winging it

PERHAPS it is no coincidence Brenda will no longer use the RAF's aging British Aerospace 146 for royal duties. The Committee on Toxicity is to consider a report that suggests airline pilots have suffered "alarming" cognitive failures after prolonged exposure to polluted air in cockpit and cabins.

Most of the 27 pilots in the clinical study had been flying BAe 146s or B757s, believed to be the worst for engine leaks which contaminate the air that is pumped into the craft.

Some of them reported mixing up or being unable to retain vital numerical data about altitude, speed and direction provided by air traffic control. Some were completing tasks in the wrong sequence, setting incorrect levels for climbing or descending and taking off with the wrong flap settings.

Other pilots questioned in the clinical study reported that they had been unable to respond to instructions from air traffic control and had been unable to recall vital things like whether the



aircraft's undercarriage had been raised or lowered.

Six of the pilots are apparently still flying. One, now 50, who has retired and did not wish to be identified, told the *Eye* he realised something was seriously wrong when he could not remember the basic pre-flight check routine. Now he has trouble with words, extreme fatigue and memory loss.

The *Eye* first reported concerns about dangerous toxic fumes in the craft, including the Queen's BAe 146, back in 2000, when reports starting surfacing around the world, particularly in Australia, about alarming incidents of pilots being overcome by fumes, dizziness and headaches. Even then there were concerns about the long-term effect on pilots health of leaking organophosphates into the craft.

Now, the clinical study by Dr Sarah Mackenzie Ross, a consultant clinical neuro-psychologist from University College London, has also found high levels of a range of volatile organic compounds, such as benzene and toluene, in their blood and body fats. Nickel was found in all B757 pilots.

Although the study is limited because there are no "controls", Dr Mackenzie Ross reported that the levels of toxic chemicals in the blood were higher than population averages.

All of the pilots reported chronic health problems, including fatigue and gut problems, and numbness in their finger and toes. They all suffered memory loss and difficulties in retrieving words.

The airline industry has been reluctant to admit that there is a problem, arguing that any organophosphates entering the aircraft are in such small doses as to be insignificant. The preliminary findings by Dr Mackenzie Ross, while not providing any kind of causal link, might suggest otherwise. Curiously none of the pilots has been invited to attend the Committee on Toxicology meeting.

TAX CREDITS

Revenue scream

IN THE long-running fiasco that is Gordon Brown's tax credit scheme (which causes misery to thousands while supposedly increasing their incomes), few horror stories match that of Sara Stephenson, a 34-year-old single mother.

Ms Stephenson received a tax credit boost to her income as an administrator, but ran into trouble, tax credit wise, when she was hospitalised with bleeding on the brain. Briefly, her then boyfriend stayed at her home to care for her two children while she was recovering.

Despite being provided with proof to the contrary, the Inland Revenue decided that Ms Stephenson was co-habiting and started to demand the repayment of both working and child tax credits going back to 2003. At one stage the Revenue told Ms Stephenson she had 30 days to repay nearly £20,000 or they would seize her house.

That figure was far more than any tax credit she had received – it included a whole year of payments for 2004-5, when she only received the benefit for five months – but the Revenue was never even able to provide an accurate break-down.

"At a time when I was supposed to be avoiding any kind of stress, I was bullied and menaced. I provided every piece of evidence which proved beyond a doubt that I was a single parent in every sense of the word – and it fell on deaf ears. The worry and distress of it all cost me my job and nearly caused me to have a breakdown," she told the *Eye*.

Finally, with the support of her father who found her a solicitor, she took her case to a social security tribunal. Its chairman was scathing. "The tribunal was appalled at the very low quality of the investigation," he said. "The decision should not even have been made in the first place on the evidence available. It was a waste of taxpayers' money and unnecessarily forced Ms Stephenson to go through the trauma of seeking to defend herself before tribunal."

He said she had given honest and reliable evidence not only to the tribunal, but to the Inland Revenue too, while it had not bothered to check out the basic facts.

That ruling came nearly a year ago, since when Ms Stephenson has been fighting for reimbursement of her legal costs and compensation as she is entitled to under the tax credit and tribunal rules. She was forced to take the matter to the Adjudicators Office after the Inland Revenue was still trying to claim it hadn't made a mistake.

Last week the Revenue finally coughed up £350 to pay for the barrister who represented Ms Stephenson at the tribunal hearing. To compensate for the two years of extreme anxiety which nearly drove her to a breakdown, it paid her £100. She doesn't have the energy to fight any more.

TAX TRUSTS

A blunt instrument

NOT before time, the Treasury is pushing through legislation in this year's finance bill to clamp down on the use of trusts to avoid inheritance tax. In future trusts above a certain value will be hit by regular tax charges regardless of whether they would be used for tax dodging – a blunt approach that has caught many innocent people in the crossfire.

One particularly disadvantaged group is disabled people who aren't exempted because, based on the disability benefits they claim, they don't meet the required definition of "disabled". Among those set to lose out are sufferers of degenerative conditions such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease who have set up trusts to ensure their money is properly spent when they can no longer look after it themselves (relieving the state of a cost in the process).

When the rules were debated in parliament last month, opposition concern on this point was dismissed by Paymaster-General Dawn Primarolo on the grounds that the "majority" of charities consulted were happy with the definition. So if your disability just happens to be one not represented by these groups, tough.

Campaigners continue to press their case before the law passes its final parliamentary stage this week.

PS: The House of Lords economics affairs committee has just published a damning report into the way the trust tax changes were brought in, demanding more "clarity, certainty and simplicity" in future. A fair point – but a bit rich coming from the committee's chairman, Lord Wakeham, erstwhile chairman of Enron's audit committee.

BIG BREWERIES

Traditional pub swizz

INTERESTING independent pubs may be few and far between these days, but many attract a lot of business — business that the brewery giants would like to get their hands on.

One such pub is the Rising Sun in Epsom, Surrey, currently a successful and hugely popular free house run by Dave and Ruth Roberts. The 200-year-old establishment had been a notoriously rough pub before the Roberts' took it over seven years ago and turned it into what locals call "a real community pub".

With their own microbrewery, Pilgrim Ales, a no smoking policy and imported bottled beers and ciders, the pub has been praised by the Campaign for Real Ale and attracts pub fans from all over the country as well as a loyal local crowd. Obviously all that business looked very appealing to the big breweries.

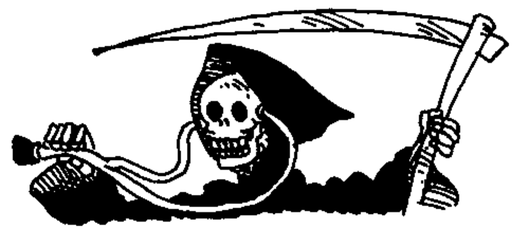
The Roberts' didn't actually own the freehold but had a free-of-tie lease on the pub — allowing them to sell whatever beers they chose — with the freehold owned by Punch Taverns. In May they were contacted by Youngs, telling them the massive Wandsworth-based brewery business was intending to buy the freehold. The sale went through and on 1 June the Roberts' received a letter telling them that the free-of-tie clause was being revoked and all the interesting and different ales on sale would have to be replaced by the same Youngs beer you can get in thousands of average pubs. In other words, they could completely change their pub and close their microbrewery or get out.

The locals started a "Save the Riser" campaign and have presented a 1,000-signature petition to Youngs. They also point out that Youngs may think they're grabbing a thriving business, but if they're getting rid of one of the main things that attract custom and driving out the publicans who made the pub into such a hit, in a few years time they'll have a struggling dull chain pub on their hands.

Another of the same please, landlord… 'cos there isn't anything else available.

IN THE BACK HEALTH SPECIAL: SEE OVER ➤

HEALTH SPECIAL



M.D WRITES...

You've been quangoed

WHY ARE NHS trusts being castigated by New Labour for exceeding their £33bn budget by 1.5 percent when the government has exceeded the budget for its own reform programme by 80 percent? That's £8bn — enough to pay off the hospital and PCT debts 16 times over.

The snappily-entitled Centrally Funded Initiatives and Services and Special Allocations (CFISSA) programme provides ring-fenced money hot from the Treasury to fund the NHS Plan. Its budget for the last three years was set at £8.6bn, £9.5bn and £10.4bn, but for the latter (2005-6), it clocked up an impressive £18.3bn. On what, exactly?

Some of the money allegedly goes on frontline services (cancer, coronary heart disease, mental health, etc), although clinicians argue that they rarely receive the correct allocation from the Department of Health. A lot is spent on quangos to support the initiative of the day (waiting, choose and book, safety, choice, patient experience, modernisation etc); and here wastage has been colossal: the setting up, for example, of a Commission for Public and Patient Involvement in Health and seeding the NHS with hundreds of Patient Involvement Forums which have all now folded. Also an NHS Modernisation Agency, an NHS University and an NHS Leadership Centre were all set up as separate entities, employing thousands of staff, and then all were merged into an NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement somewhere in Warwick. What have they achieved?

The National Patient Safety Agency had high hopes of making patients' safe but appears to have achieved very little apart from telling everyone to wash their hands. It has, in common with the other quangos, spent a fortune on management consultants and appears to have very little grasp of where its money goes.

If the Audit Commission and Healthcare Commission weren't engaged in an unseemly power struggle, they might take time to adjudicate on whether the CFISSA budgets represent value for money and who's responsible for the horrendous overspend. But put CFISSA into the AC or HC websites, and there are no hits. It seems it is as useless and unaccountable as the Health Secretary herself.

Meanwhile, hospitals are closing, staff are laid off, bills are unpaid, referrals and operations are cancelled. Yes, it's our best year ever...

BT & IT

Hole truth?

THE PROSPECT of a seriously big hole in BT's accounts looks increasingly likely as a parliamentary answer reveals that more than two years into its £996m contract as "local service provider" for London under the NHS's national programme for IT (NPfIT), BT received just £1.3m, or 0.1 percent of the contract, up to April this year.

Its costs on this work so far in developing software packages that enable doctor to speak unto doctor and access patient records are almost certainly in the hundreds of millions, yet no losses from it are mentioned in the company's accounts. The company therefore looks to be treating its expenses as building up a valuable asset in a way which NPfIT boss Richard Granger told parliament a number of suppliers are doing.

But as the bulk of BT's costs have been paid to its software supplier IDX, whom it is set to ditch in favour of rival Cerner, is the work really worth what it has paid out?

If not there could be some serious questions about BT's latest accounts and the growth in profits they show (which would be wiped out by the cash shortfall) — not to mention the bumper bonuses enjoyed by BT executives on the back of it.

TURNAROUND

A&& right for some...

THE financial crisis in the health service is proving a bonanza for consultants (management, not clinical), which is not surprising as they're running the "turnaround" programme under which lucrative advisory contracts are dished out.

When Health Secretary (and former Accenture consultant) Patricia Hewitt (right) set up a National Programme Office (NPO) for the turnaround project, she immediately stuffed it full of consultants.

The team of five case managers and analysts, the *Eye* has discovered, all come from PricewaterhouseCoopers. Their work is overseen by NPO director Keith Davies, whose qualification for the job is to have successfully turned around a struggling US insurance company (a revealing glimpse, perhaps, of what Hewitt has in mind for the NHS).

The PwC-dominated NPO decides what needs to be done to address a trust's deficit. In more than 60 cases it has seen fit to send in one of the big four accountancy/consultancy firms (in many cases, er, PwC) at hundreds of thousands of pounds a go. Invariably the financial whizz kids have no particular health sector experience but know all about "corporate recovery". They quickly work out that costs need to be cut and, as swathes of the budget are often taken up with multi-million pound PFI contracts that the trusts will have been advised to sign by one of the big four firms, that just leaves essential services to be axed (see *Doing the Rounds*, last *Eye*).

Every strategic health authority also has to have a turnaround director. One of the most financially troubled — Surrey and Sussex — has decided that if you can't beat 'em, join 'em, and taken one Mike Magee on secondment from, yep, PwC.

CASE NOTES

1: THE PFI HOSPITAL

"FIFTEEN YEARS after it was threatened with closure, Savernake Hospital is now celebrating a new beginning," Wiltshire health chiefs proudly announced, opening their £9m PFI redevelopment last July.

Twelve months later, and how things have changed. After a £20m overspend in 2005, the Kennet, North Wiltshire and West Wiltshire Primary Care Trusts are currently consulting on their "Pathways for Change" proposals for massive cuts to NHS services in the region.

All three options spell doom for community hospitals in Westbury, Warminster and (as reported in *Eye* 1159) the much-praised Trowbridge hospital. But Option 1 also proposes the closure of... Savernake Hospital.

The small Savernake Hospital in Marlborough was redeveloped through a private finance deal with Chiltern Securities, with the trust signed up to lease the building back for the next 30 years. It has 25 inpatient "intermediate care" beds (but enough room to expand by another 10), an outpatients service and a minor injuries unit. All the options presented by the trusts include closing Savernake's minor injuries unit, so anyone injured nearby would have to travel to Chippenham, 20 miles away. Thus the trust is stuck with 29 years of lease agreement remaining on a building it cannot afford to run.

2: PATIENT CHOICE

THE feather-bedding of the private sector is continuing at the expense of the NHS.

Cash-strapped Isle of Wight Primary Care Trust was told by its strategic health authority that "in line with government policy" it must pay Tribal subsidiary Mercury Health £200,000 to buy 200 cataract operations at its Portsmouth medical centre to give IoW patients "choice". It seems they have chosen to have surgery in their local hospital, however. So far this year only four patients have gone to Mercury for surgery (cost: £50,000 for a £1,000 op).

The IoW trust would have preferred to spend the money on patients rather than handing a fat profit to Mercury directors, but its efforts to barter the contract with other trusts failed. No one else wanted the cataract ops either.

Nor are "patient choice" and the "purchaser provider" split working along the coast in Bournemouth, where the Royal Bournemouth Hospital is turning away patients saying it is owed £6m for treatment by the local primary care trust. The hospital — one of the government's flagship foundations — says it is treating patients at a cost of £1m a month more than the PCT is paying and it can neither afford, nor is permitted under new market rules, to do work for which it is not paid. An estimated 10,000 patients will have to join a queue or travel to hospitals elsewhere for treatment. Some choice.

3: WHISTLEBLOWING

LAST December the *Eye* reported how the NHS Appointments Commission was proposing to sack Paul Wesson, a director of South West Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust.

Mr Wesson was the only remaining director of the PCT who opposed Labour's scheme to pay private health firm Netcare for thousands of eye operations, diverting resources from Oxford's excellent NHS Eye Hospital. He also opposed the closure of some community hospitals.

The Appointments Commission duly sacked Mr Wesson, who asked for a judicial review of the decision. Last month the court quashed the sacking because it was "unlawful".

The judgment is a moral victory for Wesson, but only provides modest compensation: Patricia Hewitt has closed most NHS PCTs, merging them into fewer trusts covering larger areas. The South West Oxfordshire PCT will close in September, so Wesson is only entitled to money covering his salary up to that point.

The Appointments Commission dismissed Wesson at the prompting of Fred Hucker, chairman of South West Oxfordshire PCT. This is the second decision associated with Hucker that has been overturned by judicial review. Soon after his appointment in 2004, his trust announced the closure of a minor injuries unit in Witney, without consultation. The high court reversed that decision too and made the trust pay costs.

In the City

FOR a one-time Home Secretary and law and order champion, former Tory leader Michael Howard shows a serious lack of judgement in a bid to boost his post-politics income by becoming a front man for Washington-based private eyes, Diligence. But then Diligence, which has impressive right-wing connections in London and Washington, may feel it needs the cloak of respectability abroad that a former British senior politician can provide.

Diligence's current problems stem from its role in a spectacular corporate cloak and dagger coup in Bermuda targeting accountants KPMG which has since gone spectacularly and expensively wrong.

A senior Diligence executive and a female companion allegedly impersonated "spooks" from MI6 and the CIA to obtain access from KPMG's local office to a highly sensitive investigation being carried out for the Bermudan authorities. The bean counters were seemingly persuaded that in sharing the results of their investigation they were assisting the fight against Russian-linked international financial crime and corruption.

The investigation related to the Bermuda-based IPOC International Growth Fund which is engaged in a long-running battle with leading Russian oligarch Mikhail Fridman over control of a 25 percent stake in Megafon, the third largest mobile phone operator in Russia.

So successful was the Diligence operation that the two undercover operatives apparently obtained access to documents from the KPMG computers which contained intimate details of not just IPOC's finances but also interviews with key individuals.

The Bermudan investigation was similar to those mounted here by the Department of Timidity & Inaction with two local KPMG partners appointed as inspectors in 2004 to probe IPOC and a gaggle of related companies. IPOC had to pay for the investigation, which has cost some $8m to date.

Imagine the surprise therefore at IPOC and KPMG when material taken verbatim from internal investigation documents surfaced last July in the Zurich arbitration proceedings between LV Finance, the sellers of the Megafon stake to Fridman's Alfa group, and IPOC.

Ironically Alfa is a long-time client of Diligence's rival, Kroll Associates. However, Kroll may not have fancied the Bermuda caper if asked. It still has major problems of its own in Brazil where it is accused of illegally obtaining bank, telephone and computer records in another telecoms battle.

Kroll also has some previous in the Megafon matter. There were allegations of a local investigator being used to place one of the Swiss lawyers hearing a similar arbitration case in Geneva into the dispute under surveillance/ investigation. The Geneva court ruled in favour of IPOC in 2004.

Kroll also faces ongoing repercussions from the suicide of Abbey National analyst Richard Chang. Chang's line manager Vincent Santeng has a ten-day employment tribunal hearing against Abbey due to start later this month. The role of the Kroll investigators in interviewing him and Chang over anonymous letters alleging corruption and cronyism in IT contracts will be front and centre in that hearing.

A key issue in the Megafon arbitration has been just who is behind IPOC. Alfa has maintained for some time that the real owner was not Danish lawyer Jeffrey Galmond, who said he was the principal, but the Russian telecoms minister Leonid Reiman. Reiman is part of the St Petersburg circle around President Vladimir Putin.

"Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains"

Reiman has strenuously denied that he was interested in IPOC. But in May the Zurich tribunal ruled that Reiman was the beneficial owner of IPOC and that as such the option agreement, which gave IPOC the right to 25 percent of Megafon, was unenforceable because it was contrary to Russian law.

The tribunal found that Reiman, whom it did not name but who was clearly the "high ranking" official in charge of telecoms regulation referred to, had "allowed his personal enrichment to take precedence over – and at the expense of – the state assets which he had the obligation to protect". The official had used his position to transfer the stake in Megafon to IPOC "for no value".

Just how crucial the KPMG documents were in persuading the tribunal to make this finding is not clear. However, what is certain is that KPMG was mightily embarrassed at the mysterious leak and unable to find the source.

That was until last October when a bundle of this time Diligence internal documents were delivered in the legendary brown envelope to a KPMG office in New Jersey. These contained emails and invoices, which indicated who and how the IPOC material had found its way to the LV/Alfa lawyers in Zurich. The documents may have come from a disaffected former employee.

A month later KPMG in Bermuda and its two partner/inspectors Malcolm Butterfield and Michael Morrison sued Diligence in Washington claiming at least $11m in damages. KPMG accused Diligence of using "fraud and bribery" to obtain confidential information.

Several pages of the complaint are redacted: in other words, sensitive material was removed from public view. These deal with the discussions between KPMG and the Diligence undercover operatives. The complaint then goes on to declare that "all the foregoing statements made by Mr… and Ms… to Mr… were false and were made with intent to defraud and wrongly obtain confidential documents and information about the IPOC investigation".

Diligence was said to have acted in a "wilful and wanton" manner and that "it is a normal and usual part of the defendant's business practices to obtain information through blatantly fraudulent and illegal conduct". Something which would come as an unwelcome surprise to Michael Howard.

Alluding to the alleged use by the Diligence duo of the cover of intelligence officers, the KPMG action claimed their behavior interfered with "the conduct of legitimate intelligence gathering operations of the British and US governments and therefore poses a serious risk and danger to the general public". In other words, the next time the man from MI6 or the CIA comes calling, accountants would do well to say go to court and get an order then we might help you instead of letting the spooks browse through the files on a "no finger prints" basis.

The KPMG action was a major embarrassment to Diligence. So it is not surprising that last month the company settled with KPMG on undisclosed terms. Diligence has denied any wrongdoing.

But that might not be the end of the matter. Having lost the arbitration case and been accused of being the vehicle for a corrupt Russian minister, IPOC two weeks ago launched its own action against Diligence in Washington claiming it had been involved in the "impersonation of US and/or British intelligence agents".

Also named as defendants are the investigators' original backers, powerful DC lobbyists Barbour Griffith & Rogers. BGR has close ties to the Bush family and the upper echelons of the Republican Party. It helped to find the backing for Diligence's founders – former SBS officer Nick Day and former CIA agent Mike Baker. Baker has since departed leaving Day in charge. He declined to discuss the KPMG case.

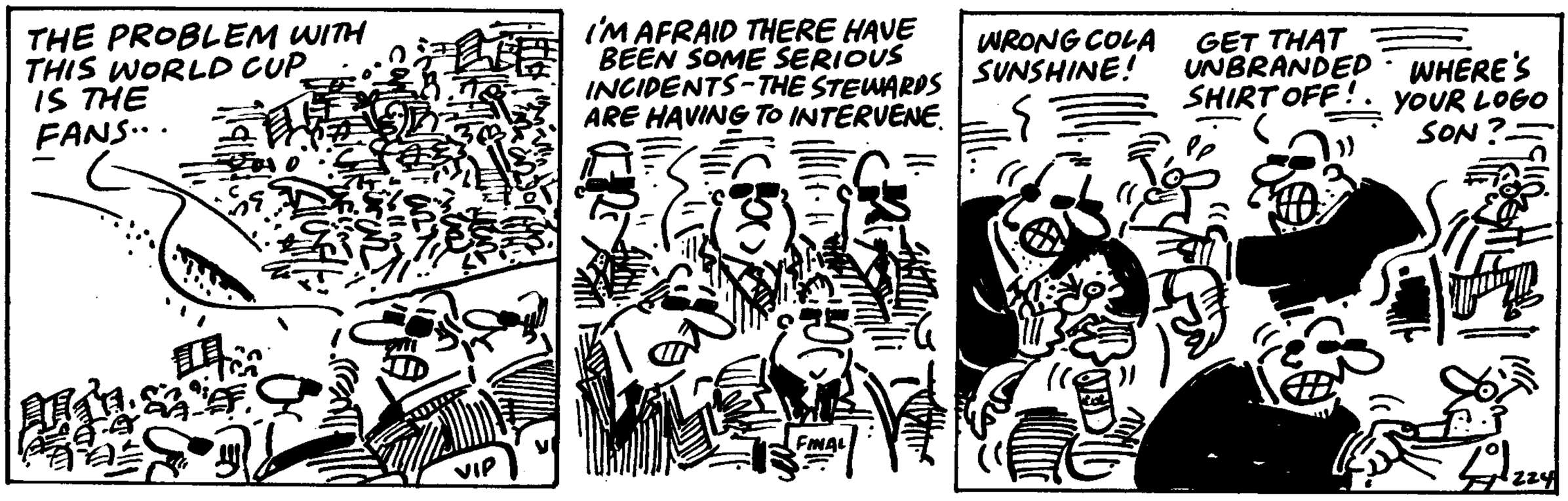
All of which makes a messy welcome for Michael Howard, who was no doubt encouraged into the role of head of Diligence Europe by the presence on its advisory board of an old Thatcherite pal, Lord Charles Powell. He was perhaps also influenced by the presence as Diligence worldwide chairman of Richard Burt, the former US ambassador and associate of another Thatcher worshipper, Lord Conrad Black.

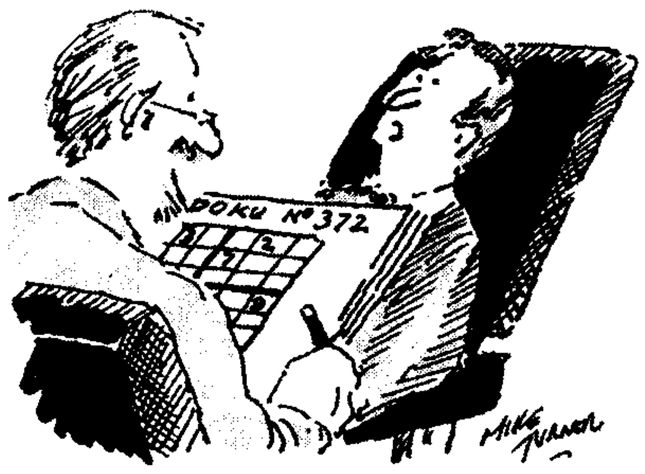
But Black is now facing fraud charges in Chicago for pillaging which the Hollinger International board, including Burt, allowed him to commit. An internal 2004 report into the role of the Hollinger audit committee on which Burt sat branded its actions "ineffective and careless". Burt and his two co-directors were blamed for an "inexplicable and nearly complete lack of

See over ☛

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG


THE PROBLEM WITH THIS WORLD CUP IS THE FANS...
VIP
I'M AFRAID THERE HAVE BEEN SOME SERIOUS INCIDENTS - THE STEWARDS ARE HAVING TO INTERVENE.
FINAL
WRONG COLA SUNSHINE!
GET THAT UNBRANDED SHIRT OFF!
WHERE'S YOUR LOGO SON?
224



"...I'm obsessed by it – mornin', noon an' night, Sudoku's drivin' me crazy..."

initiative, diligence or independent thought". Just the recommendation for the head of a company called Diligence, which investigates the failings of companies and their directors.

Ironically the Hollinger auditors who also failed to stop Black's looting were – yes, KPMG!

Burt resigned from Hollinger in January but could yet face civil action over his inaction from the Securities & Exchange Commission watchdog. Presumably the astute Powell will now be able to rely on his old friend Howard to take any future incoming flak.

Bermuda? Burt? Was this such a smart move for Michael Howard? What sort of due diligence did the former Tory leader exercise over Diligence? Answers on the back of a large cheque.

ROSNEFT chief executive Sergei Bogdanchikov will be hoping that any future visits to London following the oil group's controversial listing here next week will not result in the embarrassments of a previous trip.

In 2003 Bogdanchikov flew back to Moscow in a terrible huff after immigration officials at Biggin Hill airport demanded to inspect documents contained in his briefcase. The Rosneft boss was due to speak at a London conference as well as have meetings with BP. None of that happened after immigration officials took and copied several of the documents. Bogdanchikov blamed security officials for the incident. But why were the British officials so interested in the Rosneft chief executive who was and remains a close Putin ally?

THE nine directors and five companies who are defendants in the NHS generics drugs price-fixing fraud prosecution mounted by the SFO will this week receive the evidence that forms the basis for the case. This includes the statements from a string of company insiders including two granted immunity from prosecution just before charges were brought in April.

The first pre-trial hearing is due in October. Unusually, four of the companies have already been called in by the SFO, separate from the individual defendants, to make clear the strength of the case against them. Three of the UK companies are owned by the multinationals – Teva, Merck and Ranbaxy. A fourth defendant is the listed Goldshield Group.

All the defendants, both corporate and individual, deny any wrongdoing. However, the corporate defendants (particularly non-executive directors) will need to take account of the commercial interests of shareholders as they consider the evidence. This could conflict with an understandable desire to support their current and former executives.

Whether and when the case proceeds to trial – not expected before late 2007 at the earliest – and against who could still be influenced by the court of appeal hearing into the appeal by former Morgan Crucible chief executive Ian Norris. This is due in the autumn. It will rule on whether price fixing was a crime in the 1990s (the period covered by the NHS case) before it was made so by the Enterprise Act. Norris faces extradition to the US so he may well appeal any adverse ruling to the law lords, although his and the NatWest Three's similar efforts over the Anglo-USA extradition treaty failed.

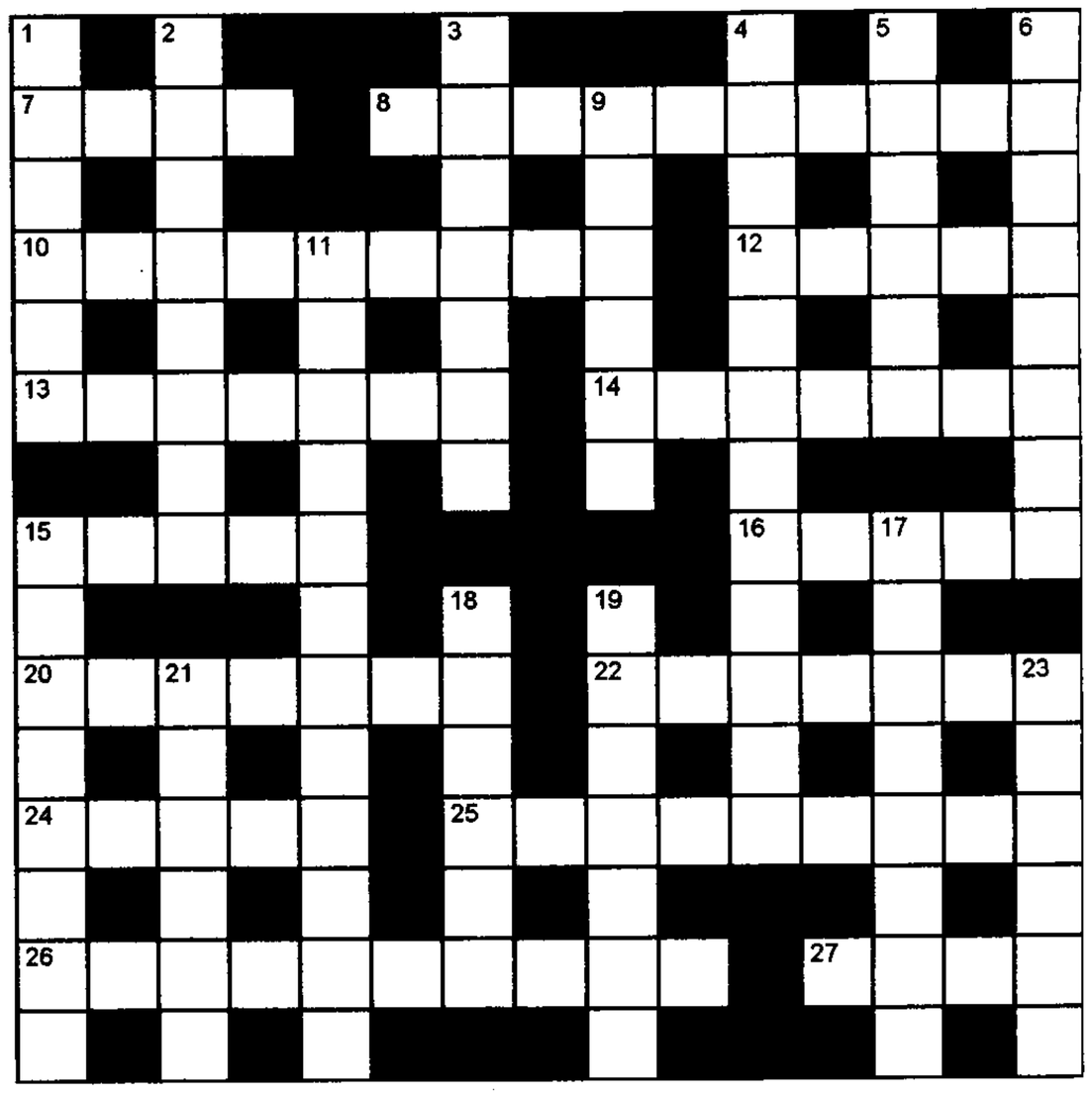
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 317

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 14 July 2006

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

7 Wife interrupts crap – idiot! (4)
8 Nookie requires material for a blow job and the same again, but soft not hard (5-5)
10 Hack the end off count's limb before getting screwed (9)
12 Hope revived *without* Conservative's "New Age" (5)
13 Hawking's achievement: "Depth of earth + Time Line gets Energy" (7)
14 Regard shag in US as a challenge visually (7)
15 "Cover back!" – party substitute member (5)
16 Famous people's pointless shit ... (5)
20 ... so is rip off, gentlemen (7)
22 Get worked up about Blair's end – put your foot in it (7)
24 Arab worker should be put inside, I say (5)
25 One-time Labour leader's member on which dogs could be rested (9)
26 "Pa Cyclops cavorting with Anne" – CNN abandoned the awful climax (10)
27 Not fully frontal caress applied to wet skin? (4)

DOWN

1 Investments once the preserve of petty criminals (6)
2 Label on peach tart (4-4)
3 See 21dn.
4 Frozen wee thing far from hard? (1,5,2,4)
5 State one needs to mount kinky Olga (6)
6 Unknown Collins is weighed down by small pox (8)
9 The necessary equipment to lace up pussy (6)
11/23 Political tone poem composed about the end of Blair and Blair's blundering lot? (12,6)
15 Pisspoor MP, first class dolt of an ambassador (8)
17 Hitler once creating bloody hell on polar expedition (8)
18 Machiavellian behind covered in blubber (6)
19 Embrace, taking drugs and sit round university (7)
21/3 Casually hit sad cow, bane of Cameron and co. (6,7)
23 See 11dn.

Crossword 316 winner: JIM LAWSON

ACROSS: 7 Credo 8 Newsflash 9/10/3 Getting your end away 11 Cockatoo 13 Eddie 16 Relieve 18/25 The clap 19 Oldie 22 Body blow 24 Titanic 26/15 Slagged off 27 Magic wand 28 On top.

DOWN: 1 Meat Loaf 2 Monicker 4 Effuse 5 Fag end 6 Shuddered 7 Cage 8 Nightclub 12 Overdosed 14 Colostomy 17 Emblazon 18 Thoughts 20 Dotage 21 Eunuch 23 SDLP.

HUSBAND

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That's not like you, Aye... You might have been drugged!
Yeah, 'cause I've only had six double vodkas and 10 alcopops

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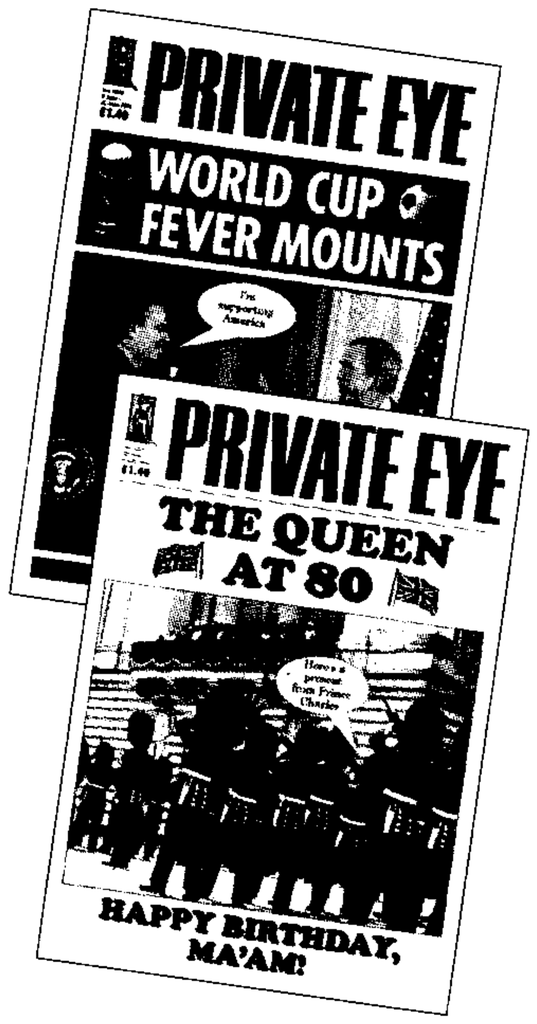

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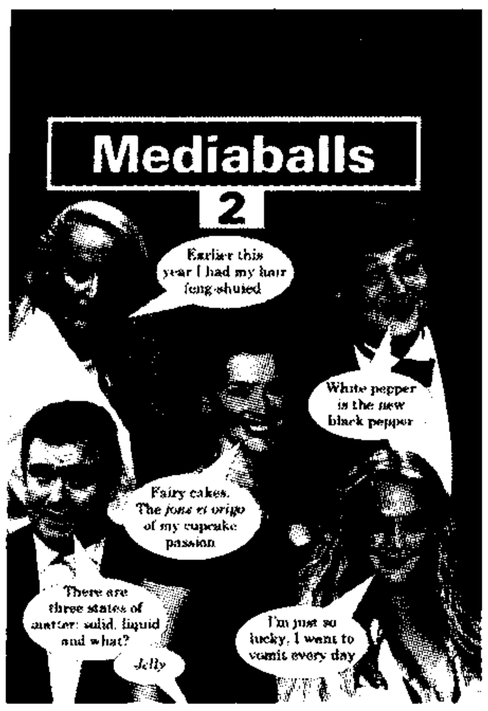
Mediaballs
2
Earlier this year I had my hair feng-shuied
White pepper is the new black pepper
Fairy cakes. The *fons et origo* of my cupcake passion
There are three states of matter: solid, liquid and what?
Jelly
I'm just so lucky. I want to vomit every day

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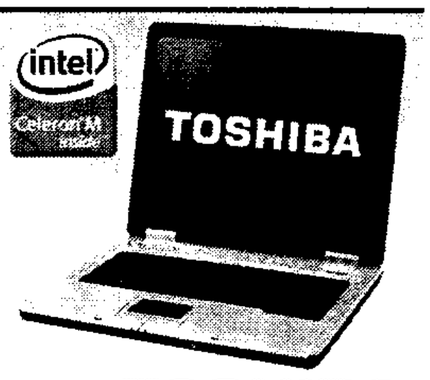

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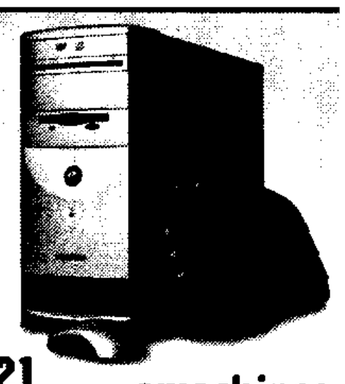

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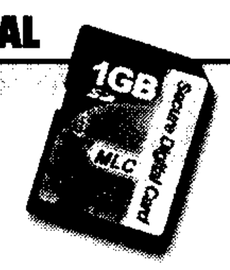

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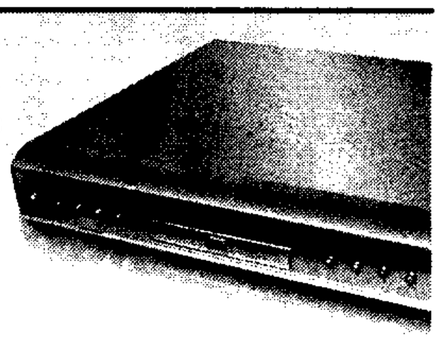

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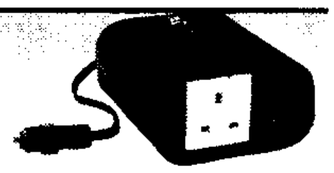

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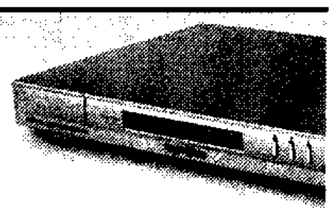

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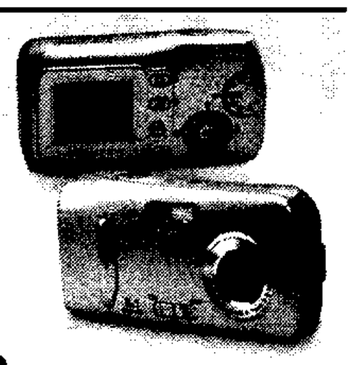

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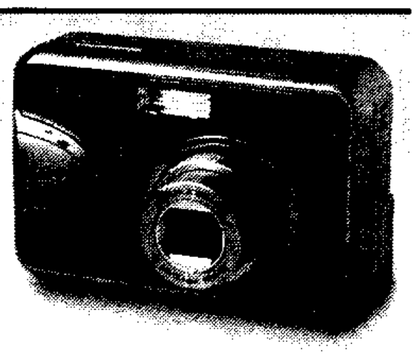

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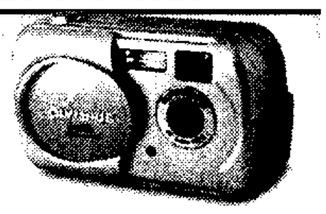

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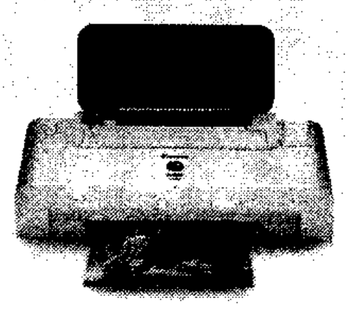

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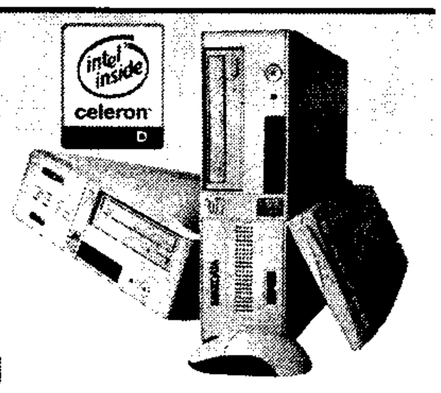

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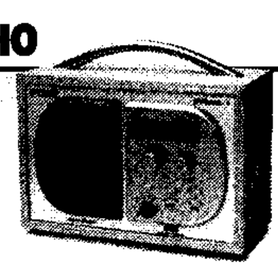

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THE PAUL FOOT AWARD 2006

For the second year running ***Private Eye*** and ***The Guardian*** are awarding a prize for investigative/campaigning journalism in memory of Paul Foot.

There will be an overall prize of £5000 and five runners up will also be awarded £1000 at a ceremony on 17th October to be held in London.

Submissions will be accepted for material published in a newspaper, magazine or on a website between 1st September 2005 and 31st August 2006. The closing date for entries is 1st September 2006.

For full details and application form visit
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The British clothing chain store has a lot to fear from ***Mr. Raja M Daswani*** of Kowloon. If there were a global ambassador for men's suiting, Mr Daswani, who owns and runs Hong Kong's biggest tailoring business, would be that man. He and his family team measure and make hundreds of suits a week for discerning clients across the world.

Indeed, so successful is ***Mr. Daswani***, that – a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up – he freely admits he doesn't really need to work any more: 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business. It's a mission.

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Raja Daswani may be based in Hong Kong, but his sartorial mission to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer brings him to the UK as often as once a month. He and his team take over hotel suites in major cities, so British customers can make an appointment and get the full Kowloon Monty.

Measurements and digital photos are taken here and emailed to Hong Kong. Often, your suit will be started on by a tailor 6,000 miles away before you've even left the hotel. You can have it couriered within a week or so, or wait for a second fitting when the Raja team hits your town again a few weeks later.

It now remains to see whether the Raja revolution, with its inspired mix of artistic flair, entrepreneurial genius and digital technology, will see the end of the off-the-peg British chain store suit. On price alone, it's a sartorial solution that will even please the Suits in accounts.

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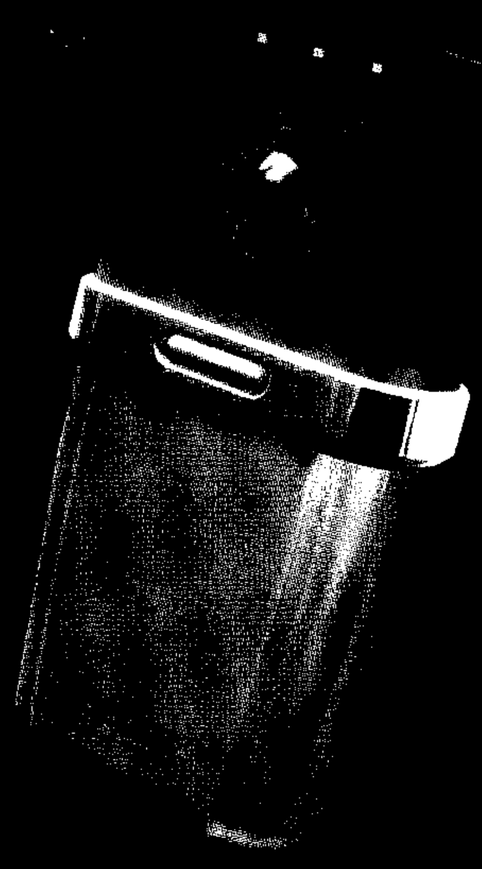

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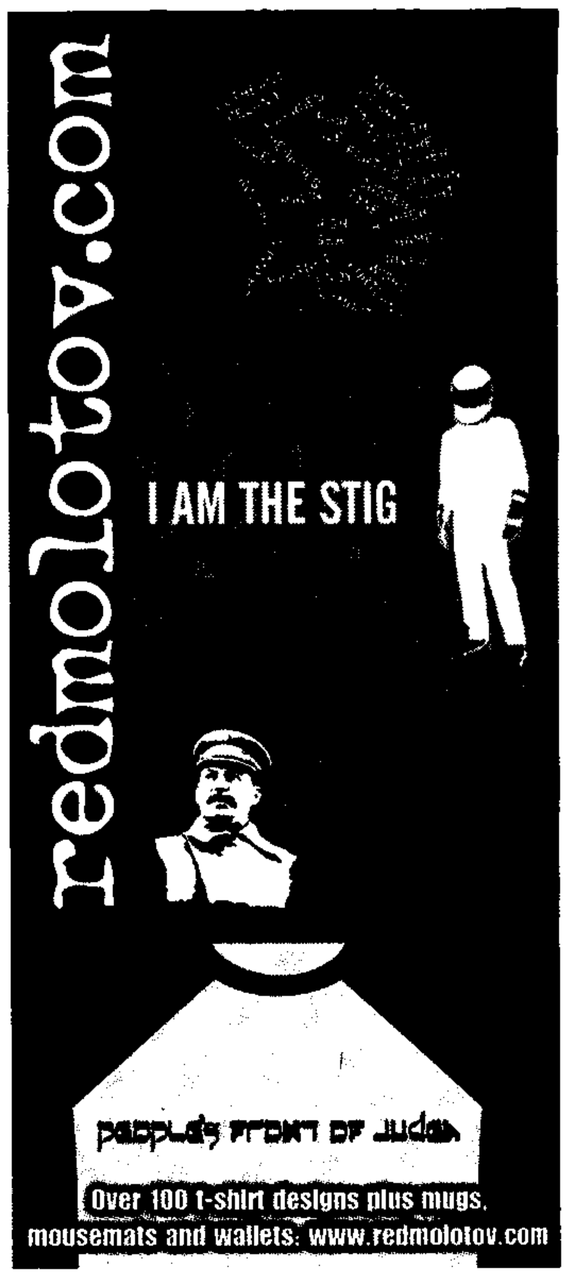

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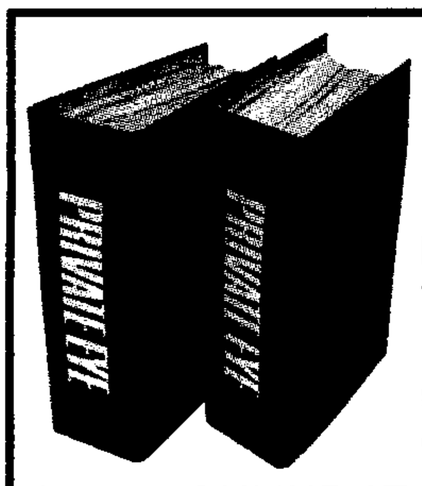

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